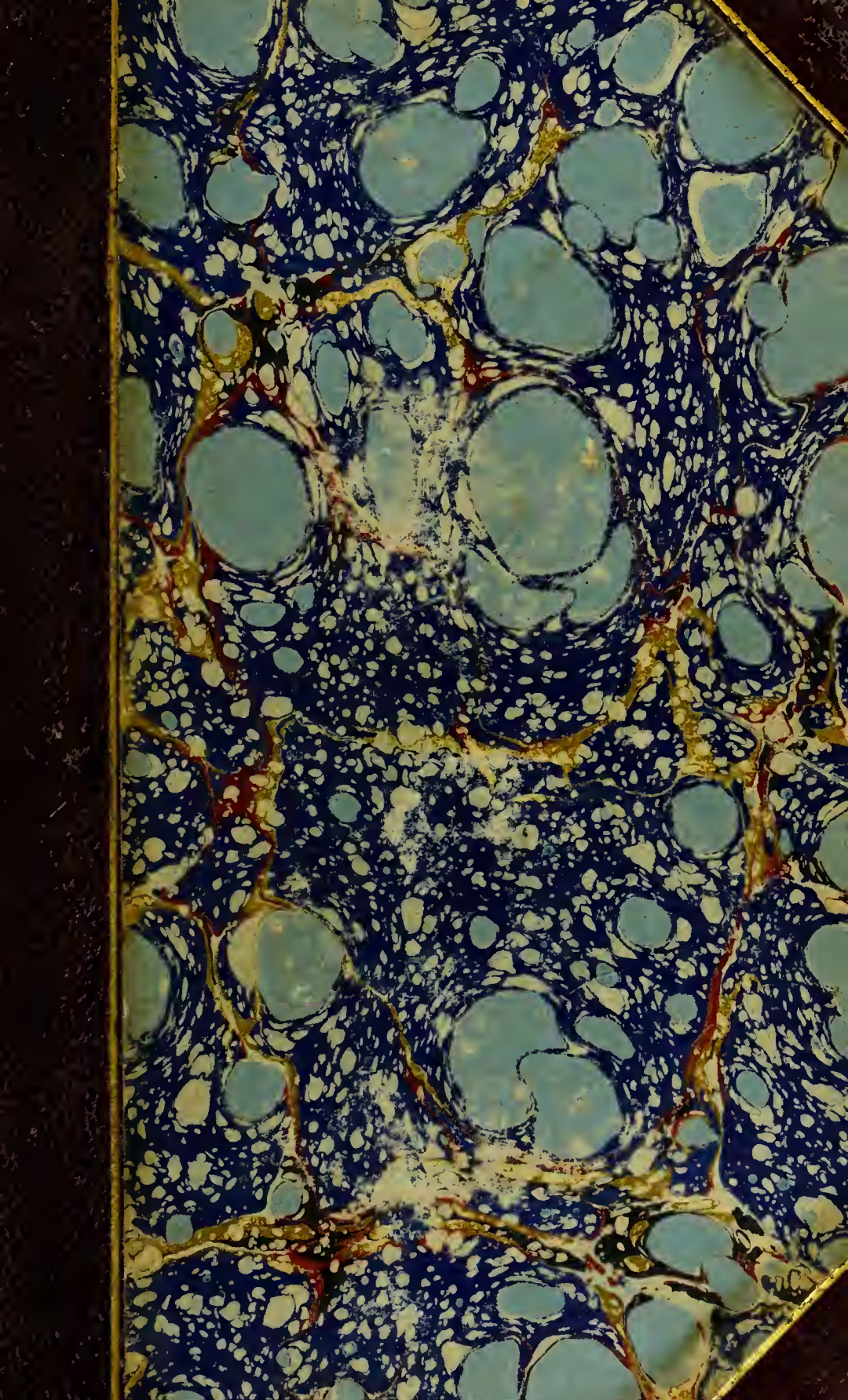
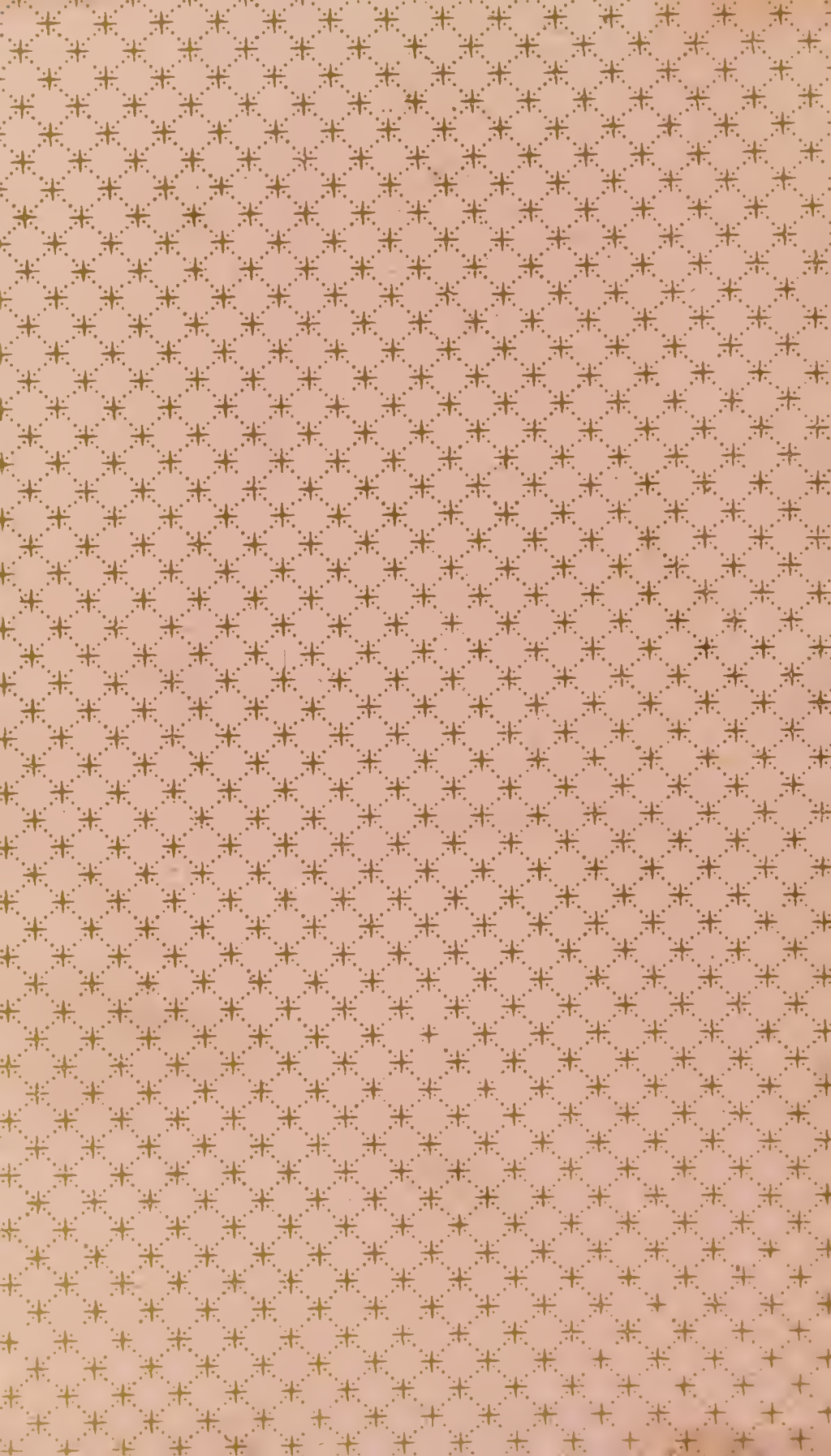
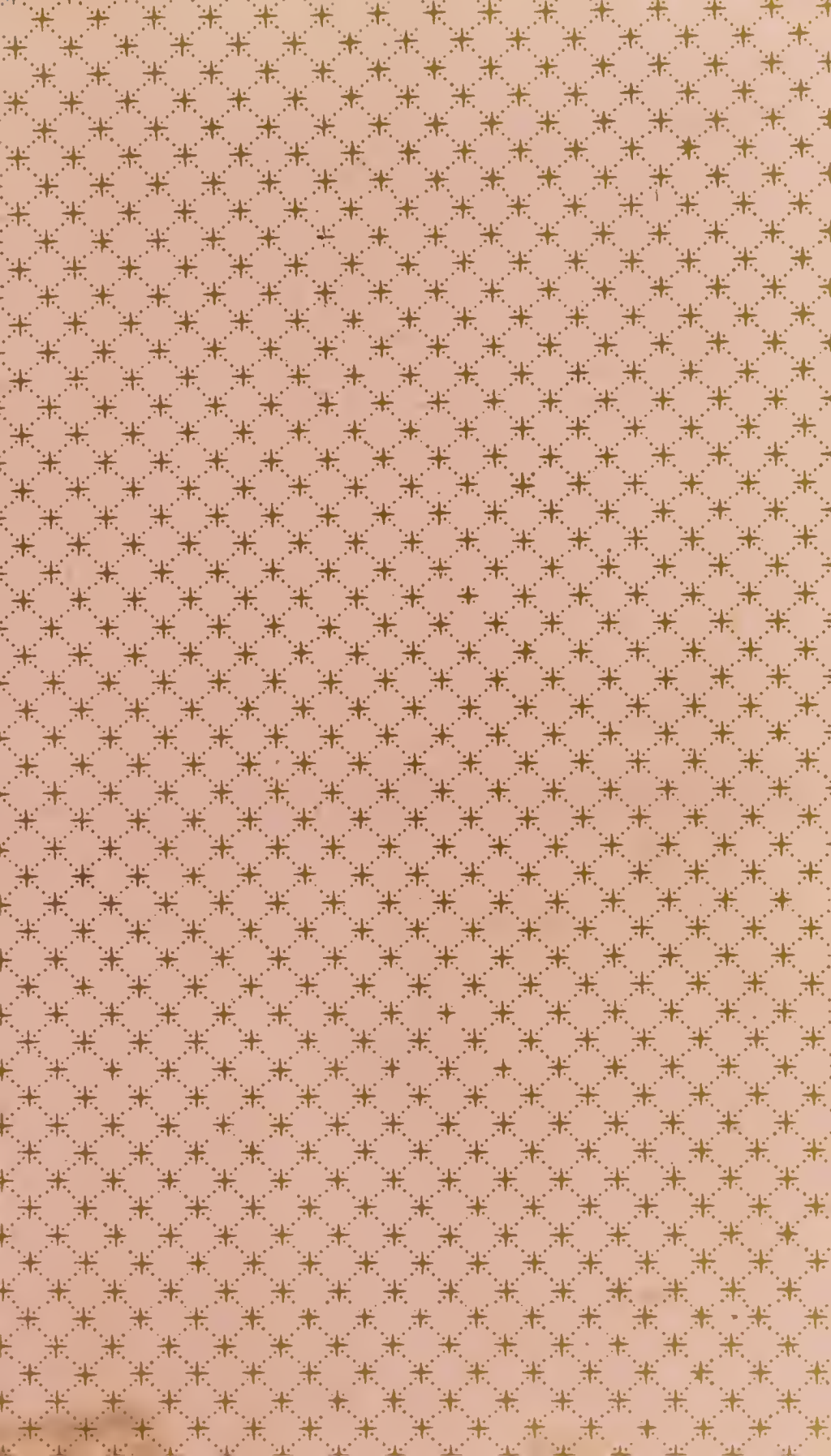








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I Promessi Sposi.

THE BETROTHED.

BY

ALESSANDRO MANZONI.



LUCIA.

A NEW TRANSLATION.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.

1844.



Advertisement.

WHAT has a translator of "*I Promessi Sposi*" to say for himself? To praise his author would be superfluous for those who mean to read the work, and impertinent for others: besides, it would be difficult to say anything, without saying too much. To praise his own performance might, perhaps, be more acceptable to himself than to any one else.

Without, however, expatiating on either of these fruitful themes, the translator may be allowed to make two remarks:—

First, that the English reader is here, for the first time, presented with a translation of the whole, un mutilated work of Manzoni; whereas the only other book in English, professing to be a translation of it, omits and alters, *ad libitum*, or rather with just so much of method as to bring down its high religious and moral tone more nearly to the level of common tastes.

ADVERTISEMENT.

And secondly,—In putting before Englishmen such masterly pictures of religious truth and beauty, the translator would not be supposed to hold up for imitation or admiration every practice or doctrine implied in Manzoni's work. Perhaps, after all, such a protest is but a token that the translator has imbibed somewhat of the cautious spirit of Don Abbondio, as, of course, those topics on which differences might arise are not brought forward argumentatively in a work of the imagination. Religious Italians are described as they are ; and there seems no reason why we should not profit by the lessons of courage, faith, constancy, and devotion, afforded by the history of their lives, notwithstanding those differences of tone, feeling, and manners, which, as we all know, exist between ourselves and our brethren abroad.

The Wood-cuts, it should be added, are chiefly taken from foreign illustrated editions of the work.

November, 1844.

Introduction.

*“ HISTORY may truly be defined a mighty War-
“ fare against Time, forasmuch as, taking Prisoners
“ by Force the Years of Time, already dead, she re-
“ calleth them to Life, bringeth them under Review,
“ and re-arrangeth them in Battle-Array. But the
“ illustrious Champions who in this Arena reap a
“ Harvest of Palms and Laurels, do use to seize only
“ upon the most pompous and brilliant of the Spoils,
“ embalming with their empurpled Fluid the Enter-
“ prises of Princes and Potentates, and such-like
“ qualified Personages, and embroidering with the
“ acute Needle of Genius those golden and silken
“ Threads which form an uninterrupted Tapestry
“ of famous Actions. Whereas to my Feebleness it is
“ not permitted to rise to such Arguments and peril-
“ ous Sublimities, ranging among the Labyrinths of
“ political Factions, and the warlike Clang of brazen*

*“ Trumpets : but only this, that having come to the
“ Knowledge of Facts worthy of Remembrance, even
“ though they happened to Persons of low Condition
“ and ordinary Rank, I would address myself to the
“ Task of leaving their Memory to Posterity, by giving
“ with all Accuracy and Genuineness the Account, or
“ rather Relation, of them. Wherein will be seen, on
“ a narrow Theatre, grievous Tragedies of Horror,
“ and Scenes of great Wickedness, interspersed with
“ virtuous Enterprises and angelic Goodness, opposed
“ unto Satanic Operations. And in good Truth, seeing
“ that this our Country is beneath the Rule of His
“ Catholic Majesty, our Governor, who is that Sun
“ which doth never set ; and that, moreover, in Addition,
“ shineth with reflected Light that Moon which never
“ waneth, the Hero of Prosapia, who, for the Time
“ present, occupieth his Place ; and the most noble
“ Senators, those fixed Stars, and the other admirable
“ Magistrates, who, like wandering Planets, diffuse
“ the Light in all Quarters, hereby forming a most
“ glorious Firmament,—other Cause cannot be dis-
“ covered wherefore it should be transmuted into the
“ dark Shadows of infernal Deeds, Wickedness, and
“ Cruelty, such as by rash Men are multiplied, except
“ it come to pass by diabolical Art and Plottings, since
“ human Malice alone could never suffice to resist so
“ great a Force of Heroes, who, with the Eyes of Argus,
“ and Limbs of Briareus, deal with the public Wealth.*

“ Wherefore, describing these Events which took place
 “ in the Times of my still verdant Youth, notwithstanding the greater Part of the Persons here represented have disappeared from the Stage of this World, and become Tributaries to the Fates ; nevertheless, for worthy Reasons, Silence shall shroud their Names, that is, the Names of their Families, and the same shall be observed of Places, only indicating the Territory generaliter. Nor let any one say that this will be an Unperfectness in the Story, and Deformity of this my unpolished Production ; at least, let not such a Critic be a Person greedy of philosophic Repute ; for as to Men versed in the Stores of Philosophy, they will see clearly that there is Nothing wanting to the Substance of the said Narrative. Forasmuch as, it being self-evident, and denied by none, that Names are Nothing but mere—the merest Accidents”

—But when I shall have undergone the heroic fatigue of transcribing this history from this blotted and bescratched autograph, and shall have brought it, as they say, to light, will any one be found to endure the fatigue of reading it ?

This doubtful reflection, originating in the endeavour to decipher a great blot which came after *Accidents*, brought my copy to a stand-still, and made me reflect more seriously upon what ought to be done. It is quite true, said I to myself, running my

eye over the manuscript, it is very true, this hail-storm of little conceits and figures of speech, does not continue so uninterruptedly through the work. The good man, after the fashion of his time, was willing at first start to make a little show of his abilities; but afterwards, in the course of the narration, sometimes for a long time together, the style runs more naturally and smoothly. Yes; but then how commonplace he is! how dry! how incorrect! Lombard idioms without end, conversational terms introduced out of place, grammatical rules neglected at will, sentences awkwardly constructed. And then, sundry Spanish elegances scattered here and there; and then, which is worse, in tragic or pitiful portions of the story, on every event which excites wonder, or calls forth reflections—in all such passages, in short, as require a little eloquence, but discreet, delicate, and in good taste, this author never fails to indulge in something of similar character with his exordium. And then, uniting, with wonderful talent, the most repugnant qualities, he manages to be unpolished and affected at once, in the same page, the same period, the same expression. Here are bombastic declamations made up by force of limping solecisms, and throughout the whole that ambitious dulness which is the peculiar characteristic of the writers of his country at that time. In very truth, it is not a production fit to present to readers of to-day,—they are

too well advised, too much disgusted with extravagances of this kind. A fortunate escape for me, that this good thought has suggested itself at the beginning of this unhappy work. I wash my hands of it.

But in the very act of shutting up the rejected manuscript, to put it away again, it seemed sad to me that so pretty a story should remain for ever unknown; for as to the story itself, it may appear differently to the reader, but to me, I say, it appears very pretty. Why, thought I, should I not take the series of facts from this manuscript, and re-cast the language? No reasonable *why not* having presented itself, this plan was embraced at once. And now you have the origin of the present work, set forth with an ingenuousness corresponding to the importance of the same. Some of these facts, however—certain customs described by our author—seemed to us so new, so strange, to say no worse, that, before putting faith in them, we determined to question other authorities. And we set ourselves the task of groping among the records of that age, to certify ourselves whether the world in those days really so went. This search dissipated all our doubts: at every step we stumbled on similar events, and even more wonderful; and, what appeared to us most decisive, we have, in the course of our reading, met with some personages, of whom having never seen any notice beyond the pages of our manuscript, we had doubted whether

they had ever enjoyed a real existence. In the course of the story we cite a few of these testimonies to gain credence for facts, from which, on account of their strangeness, the reader might have been most tempted to withhold it.

But having rejected as intolerable the diction of our author,—of what kind is that which we have substituted? Here's the point.

Whoever, without being asked, sets himself to revise another's work, must be prepared to render a strict account of his own, and, as it were, contracts an obligation to do so. This is a rule in fact and justice from which we do not pretend to exempt ourselves. So much so, that in order to conform to it with a good grace, we had proposed to give here a minute account of the manner of composition adopted by us; and to this end we went seeking, all the time the work lasted, to divine all possible and contingent criticisms, with the intention of answering them by anticipation. Nor would the difficulty have lain here (since we must say this in honour of truth): not a single criticism occurred to us, but there came along with it a triumphant answer; I do not say such an answer as resolves questions, but reverses them. Often, too, putting two criticisms, one over against the other, we made them beat each other down; or, examining well their inward essence, and attentively comparing them, we succeeded in disco-

vering and showing that, opposed as they were in appearance, they were nevertheless of one genus, springing both one and other from not perceiving the facts and principles on which a judgment should be formed. To their great surprise, we put them both together, and together walked them off. Never was there an author who proved so undeniably that he had done well. But then ! by the time we have developed all the said objections and replies, and put them in some order, alas ! we shall have made a book.

When we saw this, we put aside the thought for two reasons, which the reader will certainly find convincing : first, that to print a book to defend another, not to say the style of another, might appear ridiculous ; secondly, that of books, one at a time is enough, when there is no profit in advance.



THE BETROTHED.

CHAPTER I.

THAT branch of the lake of Como, which extends towards the south, is enclosed by two unbroken chains of mountains, which as they advance and recede, diversify its shores with numerous bays and inlets. Suddenly the lake contracts itself, and takes the course and form of a river, between a promontory on the right, and a wide open shore on the opposite side. The bridge which there joins the two banks seems to render this transformation more sensible to the eye, and marks the point where the lake ends, and the Adda again begins—soon

to resume the name of lake, where the banks receding afresh, allow the water to extend and spread itself in new gulfs and bays.

The open country, bordering the lake, formed of the alluvial deposit of three great torrents, reclines upon the roots of two contiguous mountains, one named San Martino, the other, in the Lombard dialect, *Il Resegone*, because of its many peaks seen in profile, which in truth resemble the teeth of a saw; so much so, that no one at first sight, viewing it in front (as, for example, from the northern bastions of Milan), could fail to distinguish it, by this simple description, from the other mountains of more obscure name and ordinary form, in that long and vast chain. For a considerable distance the country rises with a gentle and continuous ascent: afterwards it is broken into hill and dale, terraces and elevated plains, formed by the intertwining of the roots of the two mountains, and the action of the waters. The shore itself, intersected by the torrents, consists for the most part of gravel and large flints; the rest of the plain, of fields and vineyards, interspersed with towns, villages, and hamlets: other parts are clothed with woods, extending far up the mountain.

Lecco, the principal of these towns, giving its name to the territory, is at a short distance from the bridge, and so close upon the shore, that, when the waters are high, it seems to stand in the lake itself. A large town even now, it promises soon to become a city. At the time the events happened which we undertake to recount, this town, already of considerable importance, was also a place of defence, and for that reason had the honour of lodging a commander, and the advantage of possessing a fixed garrison of Spanish soldiers, who taught modesty to the damsels and matrons of the country; bestowed from time to time marks of their favour on the shoulders of a husband or a father; and never failed, in autumn, to

disperse themselves in the vineyards, to thin the grapes, and lighten for the peasant the labours of the vintage.

From one to the other of these towns, from the heights to the lake, from one height to another, down through the little valleys which lay between, there ran many narrow lanes or mule-paths, (and they still exist,) one while abrupt and steep, another level, another pleasantly sloping, in most places enclosed by walls built of large flints, and clothed here and there with ancient ivy, which, eating with its roots into the cement, usurps its place, and binds together the wall it renders verdant. For some distance these lanes are hidden, and as it were buried between the walls, so that the passenger, looking upwards, can see nothing but the sky and the peaks of some neighbouring mountain: in other places they are terraced: sometimes they skirt the edge of a plain, or project from the face of a declivity, like a long staircase, upheld by walls which flank the hill sides like bastions, but in the pathway rise only the height of a parapet—and here the eye of the traveller can range over varied and most beautiful prospects. On one side he commands the azure surface of the lake, and the inverted image of the rural banks reflected in the placid wave; on the other, the Adda, scarcely escaped from the arches of the bridge, expands itself anew into a little lake, then is again contracted, and prolongs to the horizon its bright windings; upward,—the massive piles of the mountains, overhanging the head of the gazer; below,—the cultivated terrace, the champaign, the bridge; opposite,—the further bank of the lake, and, rising from it, the mountain boundary.

Along one of these narrow lanes, in the evening of the 7th of November, in the year 1628, Don Abbondio * * * *, curate of one of the towns alluded to above, was leisurely returning home from a walk, (our author does not mention the name of the town—two blanks already!) He

was quietly repeating his office, and now and then, between one psalm and another, he would shut the breviary upon the fore-finger of his right hand, keeping it there for a mark; then, putting both his hands behind his back, the right (with the closed book) in the palm of the left, he pursued his way with down-cast eyes, kicking, from time to time, towards the wall the flints which lay as stumbling-blocks in the path. Thus he gave more undisturbed audience to the idle thoughts which had come to tempt his spirit, while his lips repeated, of their own accord, his evening prayers. Escaping from these thoughts, he raised his eyes to the mountain which rose opposite; and mechanically gazed on the gleaming of the scarcely set sun, which, making its way through the clefts of the opposite mountain, was thrown upon the projecting peaks in large unequal masses of rose-coloured light. The breviary open again, and another portion recited, he reached a turn, where he always used to raise his eyes and look forward; and so he did to-day. After the turn, the road ran straight forward about sixty yards, and then divided into two lanes, Y fashion—the right-hand path ascended towards the mountain, and led to the parsonage: the left branch descended through the valley to a torrent: and on this side the walls were not higher than about two feet. The inner walls of the two ways, instead of meeting so as to form an angle, ended in a little chapel, on which were depicted certain figures, long, waving, and terminating in a point. These, in the intention of the artist, and to the eyes of the neighbouring inhabitants, represented flames. Alternately with the flames were other figures—indescribable, meant for souls in purgatory, souls and flames of brick-colour on a grey ground, enlivened with patches of the natural wall, where the plaster was gone. The curate, having turned the corner, and looked forward, as was his custom, towards the chapel, beheld an unexpected

sight, and one he would not willingly have seen. Two men, one opposite the other, were stationed at the confluence, so to say, of the two ways: one of them was sitting across the low wall, with one leg dangling on the outer side, and the other supporting him in the path: his companion was standing up, leaning against the wall, with his arms crossed on his breast. Their dress, their carriage, and so much of their expression as could be distinguished at the distance at which the curate stood, left no doubt about their condition. Each had a green net on his head, which fell upon the left shoulder, and ended in a large tassel. Their long hair, appearing in one large lock upon the forehead: on the upper lip two long mustachios, curled at the end: their doublets, confined by bright leathern girdles, from which hung a brace of pistols: a little horn of powder, dangling round their necks, and falling on their breasts like a necklace: on the right side of their large and loose pantaloons, a pocket, and from the pocket the handle of a dagger: a sword hanging on the left, with a large basket-hilt of brass, carved in cipher, polished and gleaming:—all, at a glance, discovered them to be individuals of the species *bravo*.

This order, now quite extinct, was then most flourishing in Lombardy, and already of considerable antiquity. Has any one no clear idea of it? Here are some authentic sketches, which may give him a distinct notion of its principal characteristics, of the means put in force to destroy it, and of its obstinate vitality.

On the 8th of April, 1583, the most Illustrious and Excellent Signor Don Carlo d'Aragon, Prince of Castelvetro, Duke of Terranuova, Marquis of Avola, Count of Burgeto, grand Admiral, and grand Constable of Sicily, Governor of Milan, and Captain-General of His Catholic Majesty in Italy, *being fully informed of the intolerable misery in which this city of Milan has lain, and*

does lie, by reason of bravoos and vagabonds, publishes a ban against them, declares and defines all those to be included in this ban, and to be held bravoos and vagabonds, who, whether foreigners or natives, have no occupation, or having it do not employ themselves in it but without salary, or with, engage themselves to any cavalier or gentleman, officer or merchant to render them aid and service, or rather, as may be presumed, to lay wait against others all these he commands, that, within the term of six days, they should evacuate the country, threatens the galleys to the refractory, and grants to all officials the most strangely ample and indefinite power of executing the order. But the following year, on the 12th of April, this same Signor, perceiving that this city is completely full of the said bravoos returned to live as they had lived before, their customs wholly unchanged, and their numbers undiminished, issues another hue and cry, more vigorous and marked, in which, among other ordinances, he prescribes—*That whatsoever person, as well an inhabitant of this city as a foreigner, who, by the testimony of two witnesses, should appear to be held and commonly reputed a bravo, and to have that name, although he cannot be convicted of having committed any crime for this reputation of being a bravo alone, without any other proof, may, by the said judges, and by every individual of them, be put to the rack and torture, for process of information and although he confess no crime whatever, notwithstanding, he shall be sent to the galleys for the said three years, for the sole reputation and name of bravo, as aforesaid.* All this, and more which is omitted, because *His Excellency* is resolved to be obeyed by every one.

At hearing such brave and confident words of so great a Signor, accompanied too with such penalties, one feels much inclined to suppose that, at the echo of their rumblings, all the bravoos had disappeared for ever. But the testimony of a Signor not less authoritative, nor less

endowed with names, obliges us to believe quite the contrary. The most Illustrious and most Excellent Signor Juan Fernandez de Velasco, Constable of Castile, Grand Chamberlain of his Majesty, Duke of the city of Frias, Count of Haro and Castelnovo, Lord of the House of Velasco, and that of the Seven Infantas of Lara, Governor of the State of Milan, &c., on the 5th of June, 1593, he also, fully informed of *how much loss and destruction . . . bravoes and vagabonds are the cause, and of the mischief such sort of people effects against the public weal, in despite of justice*, warns them anew, that, within the term of six days, they are to evacuate the country, repeating, almost word for word, the threats and penalties of his predecessor. On the 23d of May, in a subsequent year, 1598, *being informed, with no little displeasure of mind, that . . . every day, in this city and state, the number of these people (bravoes and vagabonds) is on the increase, and day and night nothing is heard of them but murder, homicide, robbery, and crimes of every kind, for which there is greater facility, because these bravoes are confident of being supported by their great employers . . .* he prescribes anew the same remedies, increasing the dose, as men do in obstinate maladies. *Let every one, then, he concludes, be wholly on his guard against contravening in the least the present proclamation; for, instead of experiencing the clemency of His Excellency, he will experience the rigour of his anger . . . he being resolved and determined that this shall be the last and peremptory admonition.*

Not, however, of this opinion was the most Illustrious and most Excellent Signor, Il Signor Don Pietro Enriquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes, Captain and Governor of the State of Milan; not of this opinion was he, and for good reasons. *Being fully informed of the misery in which this city and state lies by reason of the great number of bravoes which abound in it . . . and being resolved wholly to extirpate a plant so pernicious*, he issues,

on the 5th of December, 1600, a new admonition, full of severe penalties, *with a firm purpose that, with all rigour, and without any hope of remission, they shall be fully carried out.*

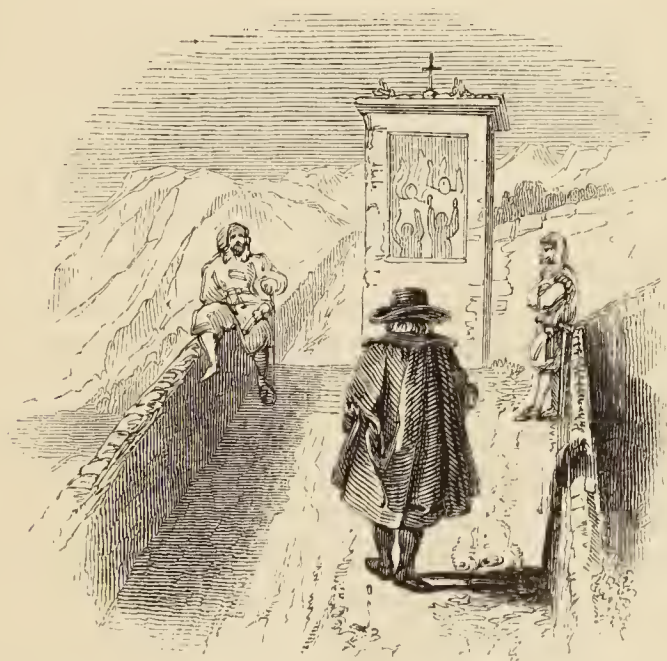
We must believe, however, that he did not apply himself to this matter with that hearty good will which he knew how to employ in contriving cabals and exciting enemies against his great enemy, Henry IV. History informs us that he succeeded in arming against that king the Duke of Savoy, and caused him to lose a city. He succeeded also in engaging the Duke of Biron on his behalf, and caused him to lose his head; but as to this pernicious plant of bravoos, certain it is that it continued to blossom till the 22d of September, 1612. On that day the most Illustrious Signor Don Giovanni de Mendosa, Marquis of Hynojosa, Gentleman, &c., Governor, &c., had serious thoughts of extirpating it. To this end he sent the usual proclamation, corrected and enlarged, to Pandolfo and Marco Tullio Molatesti, associated printers to His Majesty, with orders to print it, to the destruction of the bravoos. Yet they lived to receive, on the 24th of December, 1618, similar and more vigorous blows from the most Illustrious and most Excellent Signor, the Signor Don Gomez Suarez di Figueroa, Duke of Feria, &c., Governor, &c. Moreover, they not being hereby done to death, the most Illustrious and most Excellent Signor, the Signor Gonzala Fernandez di Cordova, (under whose government these events happened to Don Abbondio) had found himself obliged to recorrect and republish the usual proclamation against the bravoos, on the 5th day of October, 1627; *i.e.* one year one month and two days before this memorable event.

Nor was this the last publication. We do not feel bound, however, to make mention of those which ensued, as they are beyond the period of our story.

We will notice only one of the 13th of February, 1632, in which the most Illustrious and most Excellent Signor *the Duke of Feria*, a second time governor, signifies to us *that the greatest outrages are caused by those denominated braves*.

This suffices to make it pretty certain, that at the time of which we treat, there was as yet no lack of braves.

That the two described above were on the look out for some one, was but too evident; but what more alarmed Don Abbondio was, that he was assured by certain signs that he was the person expected; for, the moment he appeared, they exchanged glances, raising their heads with a movement which plainly expressed that both at once had exclaimed, "Here's our man!"



He who bestrode the wall got up, and brought his other leg into the path: his companion left leaning on the wall, and both began to walk towards him. Don Ab-

bondio, keeping the breviary open before him, as if reading, directed his glance forward to watch their movements. He saw them advancing straight towards him : multitudes of thoughts, all at once, crowded upon him ; with quick anxiety he asked himself, whether any pathway to the right or left lay between him and the bravoës ; and quickly came the answer,—no. He made a hasty examination, to discover whether he had offended some great man, some vindictive neighbour ; but even in this moment of alarm, the consoling testimony of conscience somewhat reassured him. Meanwhile the bravoës drew near, eyeing him fixedly. He put the fore-finger and middle finger of his left hand up to his collar, as if to settle it, and running the two fingers round his neck, he turned his head backwards at the same time, twisting his mouth in the same direction, and looked out of the corner of his eyes as far as he could, to see whether any one was coming ; but he saw no one. He cast a glance over the low wall into the fields—no one ; another, more subdued, along the path forward—no one but the bravoës. What is to be done ? turn back ? It is too late. Run ? It was the same as to say, follow me, or worse. Since he could not escape the danger, he went to meet it. These moments of uncertainty were already so painful, he desired only to shorten them. He quickened his pace, recited a verse in a louder tone, composed his face to a tranquil and careless expression, as well as he could, used every effort to have a smile ready ; and when he found himself in the presence of the two good men, exclaiming mentally, “ here we are ! ” he stood still. “ Signor Curato ! ” said one, staring in his face.

“ Who commands me ? ” quickly answered Don Abbondio, raising his eyes from the book, and holding it open in both hands.

“ You intend,” continued the other, with the threat-

ening angry brow of one who has caught an inferior committing some grievous fault, "you intend, to-morrow, to marry Renzo Tramaglino and Lucia Mondella!"

"That is" replied Don Abbondio, with a quivering voice,—“That is You, gentlemen, are men of the world, and know well how these things go. A poor curate has nothing to do with them. They patch up their little treaties between themselves, and then then they come to us, as one goes to the bank to make a demand; and we we are servants of the community.”

"Mark well," said the bravo, in a lower voice, but with a solemn tone of command, "this marriage is not to be performed, not to-morrow, nor ever."

"But, gentlemen," replied Don Abbondio, with the soothing, mild tone of one who would persuade an impatient man, "be so kind as put yourselves in my place. If the thing depended on me you see plainly that it is no advantage to me"

"Come, come," interrupted the bravo; "if the thing were to be decided by prating, you might soon put our heads in a poke. We know nothing about it, and we don't want to know more. A warned man you understand."

"But gentlemen like you are too just, too reasonable"

"But," (this time the other companion broke in, who had not hitherto spoken)—“but the marriage is not to be performed, or” here a great oath—“or he who performs it will never repent, because he shall have no time for it” another oath.

"Silence, silence," replied the first orator; "the Signor Curato knows the way of the world, and we are good sort of men, who don't wish to do him any harm, if he will act like a wise man. Signor Curato, the Illus-

trious Signor Don Rodrigo, our master, sends his kind respects."

To the mind of Don Abbondio this name was like the lightning flash, in a storm at night, which, illuminating for a moment and confusing all objects, increases the terror. As by instinct he made a low bow, and said, "If you could suggest"

"Oh! *suggest* is for you who know Latin," again interrupted the bravo, with a smile between awkwardness and ferocity; "it is all very well for you. But, above all, let not a word be whispered about this notice that we have given you for your good, or Ehem! it will be the same as marrying them.—Well, what will your Reverence that we say for you to the Illustrious Signor Don Rodrigo?"

"My respects."

"Be clear, Signor Curato."

" Disposed always disposed to obedience." And having said these words, he did not himself well know whether he had given a promise, or whether he had only sent an ordinary compliment. The bravoës took it, and showed that they took it, in the more serious meaning.

"Very well—good evening, Signor Curato," said one of them, leading his companion away.

Don Abbondio, who a few moments before would have given one of his eyes to have got rid of them, now wished to prolong the conversation and modify the treaty;—in vain: they would not listen, but took the path along which he had come, and were soon out of sight, singing a ballad, which I do not choose to transcribe. Poor Don Abbondio stood for a moment with his mouth open, as if enchanted: then he too departed, taking that path which led to his house, and hardly dragging one leg after the other, with a sensation of walking on crab-claws, and in a frame of mind which

the reader will better understand, after having learnt somewhat more of the character of this personage, and of the sort of times in which his lot was cast.

Don Abbondio—the reader may have discovered it already—was not born with the heart of a lion. Besides this, from his earliest years, he had had occasion to learn, that the most embarrassing of all conditions in those times, was that of an animal, without claws, and without teeth, which yet, nevertheless, had no inclination to be devoured.

The arm of the law by no means protected the quiet inoffensive man, who had no other means of inspiring fear. Not, indeed, that there was any want of laws and penalties against private violence. Laws came down like hail; crimes were recounted and particularized with minute prolixity; penalties were absurdly exorbitant; and if that were not enough, capable of augmentation in almost every case, at the will of the legislator himself and of a hundred executives; the forms of procedure studied only how to liberate the judge from every impediment in the way of passing a sentence of condemnation; the sketches we have given of the proclamations against the braves are a feeble but true index of this. Notwithstanding, or rather in great measure for this reason, these proclamations, republished and reinforced by one government after another, served only to attest most magniloquently the impotence of their authors; or if they produced any immediate effect, it was for the most part to add new vexations to those already suffered by the peaceable and helpless at the hands of the turbulent, and to increase the violence and cunning of the latter. Impunity was organized and implanted so deeply that its roots were untouched, or at least unmoved by these proclamations. Such were the asylums, such were the privileges of certain classes, privileges partly recognised by law, partly borne with

envious silence, or decried with vain protests, but kept up in fact, and guarded by these classes, and by almost every individual in them, with interested activity and punctilious jealousy. Now, impunity of this kind, threatened and insulted, but not destroyed by the proclamations, was naturally obliged, on every new threat and insult, to put in force new powers and new schemes to preserve its own existence. So it fell out in fact ; and on the appearance of a proclamation for the restraint of the violent, these sought in their real power new means more apt in effecting that which the proclamations forbade. The proclamations, indeed, could accomplish at every step the molestation of good sort of men, who had neither power themselves nor protection from others ; because, in order to have every person under their hands, to prevent or punish every crime, they subjected every movement of private life to the arbitrary will of a thousand magistrates and executives. But whoever, before committing a crime, had taken measures to secure his escape in time to a convent or a palace, where the *birri** had never dared to enter ; whoever (without any other measures) bore a livery which called to his defence the vanity and interest of a powerful family or order, such an one was free to do as he pleased, and could set at nought the clamour of the proclamations. Of those very persons to whom the enforcing of them was committed, some belonged by birth to the privileged class, some were dependent on it, as clients ; both one and the other by education, interest, habit and imitation, had embraced its maxims, and would have taken good care not to offend it for the sake of a piece of paper pasted on the corners of the streets. The men entrusted with the immediate execution of the decrees, had they been enterprising as heroes, obedient as

* *i.e.* the armed police.

monks, and devoted as martyrs, could not have had the upper hand, inferior as they were in number to those with whom they would have been engaged in battle, with the probability of being frequently abandoned, or even sacrificed by those who abstractedly, or (so to say) in theory, set them to work. But besides this, these men were, generally, chosen from the lowest and most rascally classes of those times: their office was held base even by those who stood most in fear of it, and their title a reproach. It was therefore but natural that they, instead of risking, or rather throwing away, their lives in an impracticable undertaking, should take pay for inaction, or even connivance at the powerful, and reserve the exercise of their execrated authority and diminished power for those occasions, where they could oppress without danger, *i.e.* by annoying pacific and defenceless persons.

The man who is ready to give, and expecting to receive, offence every moment, naturally seeks allies and companions. Hence the tendency of individuals to unite into classes was in these times carried to the greatest excess; new societies were formed, and each man strove to increase the power of his own party to the greatest degree. The clergy were on the watch to defend and extend their immunities; the nobility their privileges, the military their exemptions. Tradespeople and artisans were enrolled in subordinate confraternities, lawyers constituted a league, and even doctors a corporation. Each of these little oligarchies had its own peculiar power; in each the individual found it an advantage to avail himself, in proportion to their authority and vigour, of the united force of the many. Honest men availed themselves of this advantage for defence; the evil-disposed and sharp-witted made use of it to accomplish deeds of violence, for which their personal means were insufficient, and to ensure themselves

impunity. The power, however, of these various combinations was very unequal; and especially in the country, a rich and violent nobility, having a band of bravoës, and surrounded by a peasantry accustomed by immemorial tradition, and compelled, by interest or force, to look upon themselves as soldiers of their lords, exercised a power against which no other league could have maintained effectual resistance.

Our Abbondio, not noble, not rich, not courageous, was therefore accustomed from his very infancy to look upon himself as a vessel of fragile earthenware, obliged to journey in company with many vessels of iron. Hence he had very easily acquiesced in his parents' wish to make him a priest. To say the truth, he had not reflected much on the obligations and noble ends of the ministry to which he was dedicating himself: to ensure something to live upon with comfort, and to place himself in a class revered and powerful, seemed to him two sufficient reasons for his choice. But no class whatever provides for an individual, or secures him, beyond a certain point: and none dispenses him from forming his own particular system.

Don Abbondio, continually absorbed in thoughts about his own security, cared not at all for those advantages which risked a little to secure a great deal. His system was to escape all opposition, and to yield where he could not escape. In all the frequent contests carried on around him between the clergy and laity, in the perpetual collision between officials and the nobility, between the nobility and magistrates, between bravoës and soldiers, down to the pitched battle between two rustics, arising from a word, and decided with fists or poniards, an unarmed neutrality was his chosen position. If he were absolutely obliged to take a part, he favoured the stronger, always, however, with a reserve, and an endeavour to show the other that he was not willingly his

enemy. It seemed as if he would say, "Why did you not manage to be the stronger? I would have taken your side then." Keeping a respectful distance from the powerful; silently bearing their scorn, when capriciously shown in passing instances; answering with submission when it assumed a more serious and decided form; obliging, by his profound bows and respectful salutations, the most surly and haughty to return him a smile, when he met them by the way; the poor man had performed the voyage of sixty years without experiencing any very violent tempests.

It was not that he had not too his own little portion of gall in his disposition: and this continual exercise of endurance, this ceaseless giving reasons to others, these many bitter mouthfuls gulped down in silence, had so far exasperated it, that had he not had an opportunity sometimes of giving it a little of its own way, his health would certainly have suffered. But since there were in the world, close around him, some few persons whom he knew well to be incapable of hurting, upon them he was able now and then to let out the bad humour so long pent up, and take upon himself (even he) the right to be a little fantastic, and to seold unreasonably. Besides, he was a rigid censor of those who did not guide themselves by his rules; that is, when the censure could be passed, without any, the most distant, danger. Was any one beaten? he was at least imprudent;—any one murdered? he had always been a turbulent meddler. If any one, having tried to maintain his right against some powerful noble, came off with a broken head, Don Abbondio always knew how to discover some fault; a thing not difficult, since right and wrong never are divided with so clean a cut, that one party has the whole of either. Above all, he declaimed against any of his brethren, who, at their own risk, took the part of the weak and oppressed against the powerful oppressor.

This he called paying for quarrels, and giving one's legs to the dogs : he even pronounced with severity upon it, as a mixing in profane things, to the loss of dignity to the sacred ministry. Against such men he discoursed (always, however, with his eyes about him, or in a retired corner) with greater vehemence in proportion as he knew them to be strangers to anxiety about their personal safety. He had, finally, a favourite sentence, with which he always wound up discourses on these matters, that a respectable man who looked to himself, and minded his own business, could always keep clear of mischievous quarrels.

My five-and-twenty readers may imagine what impression such an encounter as has been related above would make on the mind of this pitiable being. The fearful aspect of those faces ; the great words ; the threats of a Signor known for never threatening in vain ; a system of living in quiet, the patient study of so many years, upset in a moment ; and, in prospect, a path narrow and rugged, from which no exit could be seen,—all these thoughts buzzed about tumultuously in the downeast head of Don Abbondio. “ If Renzo could be dismissed in peace with a mere *no*, it is all plain ; but he would want reasons ; and what am I to say to him ? and—and—and he is a lamb, quiet as a lamb, if no one touches him, but if he were contradicted whew ! and then—out of his senses about this Lucia, in love over head and These young men, who fall in love for want of something to do, *will* be married, and think nothing about other people, they do not care anything for the trouble they bring upon a poor curate. Unfortunate me ! What possible business had these two frightful figures to put themselves in *my* path, and interfere with *me* ? Is it I who want to be married ? Why did they not rather go and talk with . . . Let me see : what a great misfortune it is that the right plan never comes into my

head till it is too late! If I had but thought of suggesting to them to carry their message to . . .” But at this point it occurred to him that to repent of not having been aider and abettor in iniquity, was itself iniquitous; and he turned his angry thoughts upon the man who had come, in this manner, to rob him of his peace. He knew Don Rodrigo only by sight and by report; nor had he had to do with him further than to make a lowly reverence when he had chanced to meet him. It had fallen to him several times to defend this Signor against those who, with subdued voice and looks of fear, wished ill to some of his enterprises. He had said a hundred times that he was a respectable cavalier; but at this moment he bestowed upon him all those epithets which he had never heard applied by others without an exclamation of disapprobation. Amid the tumult of these thoughts he reached his own door—hastily applied the key which he held in his hand, opened, entered, carefully closed it behind him, and anxious to find himself in trust-worthy company, called quickly, “Perpetua, Perpetua!” as he went towards the dining-room, where he was sure to find Perpetua laying the cloth for supper.

Perpetua, as every one already knows, was Don Abbondio’s servant, a servant affectionate and faithful, who knew how to obey and command in turn as occasion required—to bear, in season, the grumblings and fancies of her master, and to make him bear the like when her turn came; which day by day recurred more frequently, since she had passed the sinodal age of forty, remaining single, because, as she said herself, she had refused all offers, or because she had never found any one goose enough to have her, as her friends said.

“I am coming,” replied Perpetua, putting down in its usual place a little flask of Don Abbondio’s favourite wine, and moving leisurely. But before she reached the door of the dining-room, he entered, with a step so

unsteady, with an expression so overcast, with features so disturbed, that there had been no need of Perpetua's experienced eye to discover at a glance that something very extraordinary had happened.

"Merely! what has happened to you, master?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied Don Abbondio, sinking down breathless on his arm-chair.

"How nothing! Would you make me believe this, so disordered as you are? Some great misfortune has happened."

"Oh, for heaven's sake! When I say nothing, either it is nothing, or it is something I cannot tell."

"Not tell, even to me? Who will take care of your safety, Sir? who will advise you?"

"Oh, dear! hold your tongue, and say no more: give me a glass of my wine."

"And you will persist, Sir, that it is nothing!" said Perpetua, filling the glass; and then holding it in her hand, as if she would give it in payment for the confidence he kept her waiting for so long.

"Give it here, give it here," said Don Abbondio, taking the glass from her with no very steady hand, and emptying it hastily, as if it were a draught of medicine.

"Do you wish me, then, Sir, to be obliged to ask here and there, what has happened to my master?" said Perpetua, right opposite him, with her arms akimbo, looking steadily at him, as if she would gather the truth from his eyes.

"For heaven's sake! let us have no brawling—let us have no noise: it is . . . it is my life!"

"Your life!"

"My life."

"You know, Sir, that whenever you have told me any thing sincerely in confidence, I have never . . ."

"Well done! for instance, when . . ."

Perpetua saw she had touched a wrong chord ; wherefore, suddenly changing her tone, "Signor, master," she said, with a softened and affecting voice, "I have always been an affectionate servant to you, Sir ; and if I wish to know this, it is because of my care for you, because I wish to be able to help you, to give you good advice, and to comfort you."

The fact was, Don Abbondio was, perhaps, just as anxious to get rid of his burdensome secret, as Perpetua was to know it. In consequence, after having rebutted, always more feebly, her reiterated, and more vigorous assaults, after having made her vow more than once not to breathe the subject, with many sighs and many doleful exclamations, he related at last the miserable event. When he came to the terrible name, it was necessary for Perpetua to make new and more solemn vows of silence ; and Don Abbondio, having pronounced this name, sank back on the chair, lifting up his hands in act at once of command and entreaty—exclaiming, "For heaven's sake !"

"Mercy !" exclaimed Perpetua, "Oh, what a wretch ! Oh, what a tyrant ! Oh, what a godless man !"

"Will you hold your tongue ? or do you wish to ruin me altogether ?"

"Why, we're all alone : no one can hear us. But what will you do, Sir ? Oh, my poor master !"

"You see now, you see," said Don Abbondio, in an angry tone, "what good advice this woman can give me ! She comes and asks me what shall I do, what shall I do, as if she were in a quandary, and it were my place to help her out."

"But I could even give my poor opinion ; but then"

"*But then*, let us hear."

"My advice would be, since, as every body says, our Archbishop is a saint, a bold-hearted man, and one who

is not afraid of an ugly face, and one who glories in upholding a poor curate against these tyrants, when he has an opportunity,—I should say, and I do say, that you should write a nice letter to inform him how that”

“Will you hold your tongue? will you be silent? Is this fit advice to give a poor man? When a bullet was lodged in my back, (Heaven defend me!) would the Archbishop dislodge it?”

“Why! bullets don’t fly in showers like comfits.* Woe to us, if these dogs could bite whenever they bark! And I have always taken notice that whoever knows how to show his teeth, and make use of them, is treated with respect; and just because master will never give his reasons, we are come to that pass, that every one comes to us, if I may say it to”

“Will you hold your tongue?”

“I will directly; but it is, however, certain, that when all the world sees a man always, in every encounter, ready to yield the”

“Will you hold your tongue? Is this a time for such nonsensical words?”

“Very well: you can think about it to-night; but now, don’t be doing any mischief to yourself; don’t be making yourself ill—take a mouthful to eat.”

“Think about it, shall I?” grumbled Don Abbondio, “to be sure I shall think about it. I’ve got it to think about;” and he got up, going on; “I will take nothing, nothing: I have something else to do. I know, too, what I ought to think about it. But, that this should have come on *my* head!”

“Swallow at least this other little drop,” said Perpetua, pouring it out; “you know, Sir, this always strengthens your stomach.”

* It is a custom in Italy, during the carnival, for friends to salute each other with showers of comfits, as they pass in the streets.

“ Ah, we want another strengthener — another — another—”

So saying, he took the candle, and constantly grumbling, “ A nice little business to a man like me ! and to-morrow, what is to be done ? ” with other like lamentations, went to his chamber, to lie down. When he had reached the door, he paused a moment, turned round and laid his finger on his lips, pronouncing slowly and solemnly, “ For heaven’s sake ! ” and disappeared.





CHAPTER II.

IT is related that the Prince Condé slept soundly the night before the battle of Rocroi. But, in the first place, he was very tired; and, secondly, he had given all needful previous orders, and arranged what was to be done on the morrow. Don Abbondio, on the other hand, as yet knew nothing, except that the morrow would be a day of battle: hence great part of the night was spent by him in anxious and harassing deliberations. To take no notice of the lawless intimation, and proceed with the marriage, was a plan on which he would not even expend a thought. To confide the occurrence to Renzo, and seek with him some means he dreaded the thought! "he must not let a word escape otherwise *ehm!*": thus one of the bravoës had spoken, and at the re-echoing of this *ehm!* Don Abbondio, far from thinking of transgressing such a law, began to repent of

having revealed it to Perpetua. Must he fly! Whither? And then, how many annoyances, how many reasons to give! As he rejected plan after plan, the unfortunate man tossed from side to side in bed. The course which seemed best to him was to gain time, by imposing on Renzo. He opportunely remembered that it wanted only a few days of the time when weddings were prohibited.*—"And if I can only put him off for these few days, I have then two months before me, and in two months great things may be done."—He ruminated over various pretexts to bring into play: and though they appeared to him rather slight, yet he reassured himself with the thought that his authority added to them would make them appear of sufficient weight, and that his practised experience would give him great advantage over an ignorant youth. "Let us see," he said to himself, "he thinks of his love, but I of my life; I am more interested than he: beside that I am cleverer. My dear child, if you feel your back smarting, I know not what to say; but I will not put my foot in it."—His mind being thus a little settled to deliberation, he was able at last to close his eyes: but what sleep! What dreams! Bravoes, Don Rodrigo, Renzo, pathways, rocks, flight, chase, cries, muskets!

The moment of first awaking after a misfortune, while still in perplexity, is a bitter one. The mind scarcely restored to consciousness, returns to the habitual idea of former tranquillity: but the thought of the new state of things soon presents itself with rude abruptness; and our misfortune is most trying in this moment of contrast. Dolefully Don Abbondio tasted the bitterness of this moment, and then began hastily to recapitulate the designs of the night, confirmed himself in them, arranged them anew, arose, and waited for Renzo at once with fear and impatience.

* *i. e.* Lent.

Lorenzo, or, as every one called him, Renzo, did not keep him long waiting. Scarcely had the hour arrived at which he thought he could with propriety present himself to the Curate, when he set off with the light step of a man of twenty, who was on that day to espouse her whom he loved. He had in early youth been deprived of his parents, and carried on the trade of silk-weaver, hereditary, so to say, in his family; a trade lucrative enough in former years, but even then beginning to decline, yet not to such a degree, that a clever workman was not able to make an honest livelihood by it. Work became more scarce from day to day, but the continual emigration of the workmen, attracted to the neighbouring states by promises, privileges, and large wages, left sufficient occupation for those who remained in the country. Renzo possessed, besides, a plot of land, which he cultivated, working in it himself when he was disengaged from his silk-making, so that in his station he might be called a rich man. Although this year was one of greater scarcity than those which had preceded it, and real want began to be felt already, yet he, having become a saver of money ever since he had cast his eyes upon Lucia, found himself sufficiently furnished with provisions, and had no need to beg his bread. He appeared before Don Abbondio in gay bridal costume, with feathers of various colours in his cap, with an ornamental-hilted dagger in his pocket; and with an air of festivity, and at the same time of defiance, common at that time even to men the most quiet. The hesitating and mysterious reception of Don Abbondio formed a strange contrast with the joyous and resolute bearing of the young man.

He must have got some notion in his head, thought Renzo to himself, and then said: "I have come, Signor Curate, to know at what hour it will suit you for us to be at church."

"What day are you speaking of?"

"How! of what day? Don't you remember, sir, that this is the day fixed upon?"

"To-day?" replied Don Abbondio, as if he now heard it spoken of for the first time. "To-day, to-day . . . don't be impatient, but to-day I cannot."

"To-day you cannot! What has happened, sir?"

"First of all, I do not feel well, you see."

"I am very sorry, but what you have to do, sir, is so soon done, and so little fatiguing"

"And then, and then, and then"

"And then what, Signor Curate?"

"And then, there are difficulties."

"Difficulties! What difficulties can there be?"

"You need to stand in our shoes, to understand what perplexities we have in these matters, what reasons to give. I am too soft-hearted, I think of nothing but how to remove obstacles, and make all easy, and arrange things to please others; I neglect my duty, and then I am subject to reproofs, and worse."

"But in heaven's name, don't keep me so on the stretch—tell me at once what is the matter."

"Do you know how many, many, formalities are necessary to perform a marriage regularly?"

"I ought to know a little about it," said Renzo, beginning to be warm, "for you, sir, have puzzled my head enough about it, the last few days back. But now is not every thing made clear? Is not every thing done that had to be done?"

"All, all, on your part: therefore, have patience; an ass I am to neglect my duty that I may not give pain to people. We poor curates are between the anvil and the hammer; you are impatient; I am sorry for you, poor young man; and the great people enough, one must not say everything. And *we* have to go between."

"But explain to me at once, sir, what this new formality is, which has to be gone through, as you say; and it shall be done soon."

"Do you know what the number of absolute impediments is?"

"What would you have me know about impediments, sir?"

"*Error, conditio, votum, cognatio, crimen, cultus disparitas, vis, ordo Si sit affinis*"

"Are you making game of me, sir? What do you expect me to know about your latinorum?"

"Then, if you don't understand things, have patience, and leave them to those who do."

"*Or sù!*"

"Quiet, my dear Renzo, don't get in a passion, for I am ready to do all that depends on me. I, I wish to see you satisfied; I wish you well. Alas! when I think how well off you were; what were you wanting? The whim of getting married came upon you"

"What talk is this, Signor mio," interrupted Renzo, with a voice between astonishment and anger.

"Have patience, I tell you. I wish to see you satisfied."

"In short"

"In short, my son, it is no fault of mine. I did not make the law; and before concluding a marriage, it is our special duty to certify ourselves that there is no impediment."

"But come, tell me once for all what impediment has come in the way?"

"Have patience, they are not things to be deciphered thus at a standing. It will be nothing to us, I hope; but, be the consequence great or little, we must make these researches. The text is clear and evident: *antequam matrimonium denunciaret*"

"I have told you, sir, I will have no Latin."

"But it is necessary that I should explain to you"

"But have you not made all these researches?"

"I tell you, I have not made them all, as I must."

"Why did you not do it in time, sir? Why did you tell me that all was finished? Why wait?"

"Look now! you are finding fault with my over-kindness. I have facilitated every thing to serve you without loss of time: but but now I have received enough, I know."

"And what do you wish me to do, sir?"

"To have patience for a few days. My dear son, a few days are not eternity: have patience."

"For how long?"

—We are in good train now, thought Don Abbondio to himself: and added with a more polite manner than ever: "Come now, in fifteen days I will endeavour to do"

"Fifteen days! This indeed is something new! You have had every thing your own way, sir; you fixed the day; the day arrives; and now you go tell me I must wait fifteen days. Fifteen" he began again, with a louder and more angry voice, extending his arm and striking the air with his fist; and nobody knows what shocking words he would have added to this number fifteen, if Don Abbondio had not interrupted him, taking his other hand with a timid and anxious friendliness: "Come, come, don't be angry, for heaven's sake. I will see, I will try whether in one week"

"And Lucia, what must I say to her?"

"That it has been an oversight of mine."

"And what will the world say?"

"Tell them too, that I have made a blunder through over haste, through too much good nature: lay all the fault on me. Can I say more? Come now, for one week."

“ And then will there be no more impediments?”

“ When I tell you”

“ Very well: I will be quiet for a week; but I know well enough that when it is passed, I shall get nothing but talk. But before that I shall see you again.” Having so said he retired, making a bow much less lowly than usual, to Don Abbondio, and bestowing on him a glance more expressive than reverent.

Having reached the road, and walking with a heavy heart towards the home of his betrothed, in the midst of his wrath, he turned his thoughts on the late conversation, and more and more strange it seemed to him. The cold and constrained greeting of Don Abbondio; his guarded and yet impatient words, his grey eyes, which, as he spoke, glanced inquisitively here and there, as if afraid of coming in contact with the words which issued from his mouth, the making a new thing, as it were, of the nuptials so expressly determined, and above all, the constant hinting at some great occurrence, without ever saying anything decided,—all these things put together made Renzo think that there was some overhanging mystery, different from that which Don Abbondio would have had him suppose. The youth was just on the point of turning back, to oblige him to speak more plainly; but raising his eyes, he saw Perpetua a little way before him, entering a garden* a few paces distant from the house. He gave her a call to open the garden door for him, quickened his pace, came up with her, detained her in the door-way, and stood still to have a conversation with her, intending to discover something more positive.

“ Good morning, Perpetua: I hoped we should have been merry to-day altogether.”

* To understand this scene fully, the reader must bear in mind that the Italian gardens are, almost invariably, surrounded by a wall seven or eight feet high.

“But! as Heaven wills, my poor Renzo”

“I want you to do me a kindness. The Signor Curate has been making a long story of certain reasons, which I cannot well understand; will you explain to me better why he cannot or will not marry us to-day?”

“Oh! is it likely I know my master’s secrets?”

—I said there was some hidden mystery, thought Renzo; and to draw it forth to the light, he continued: “Come, Perpetua, we are friends; tell me what you know, help an unfortunate youth.”

“It is a bad thing to be born poor, my dear Renzo.”

“That is true,” replied he, still confirming himself in his suspicions, and seeking to come nearer the question, “that is true; but is it for a priest to deal hardly with the poor?”

“Listen, Renzo, I can tell you nothing; because I know nothing; but what you may assure yourself of, is, that my master does not wish to ill-treat you, or anybody; and it is not his fault.”

“Whose fault is it then?” demanded Renzo, with an air of indifference, but with an anxious heart, and ears on the alert.

“When I tell you I know nothing In defence of my master I can speak; because I can’t bear to hear that he is ready to do ill to any one. Poor man! if he does wrong, it is from too good nature. There certainly are some wretches in the world, overbearing tyrants, men without the fear of God”

—Tyrants! wretches! thought Renzo: are not these the great men? “Come,” said he, with difficulty hiding his increasing agitation, “come, tell me who it is.”

“Oh, oh! you want to make me speak; and I cannot speak, because I know nothing: when I know nothing, it is the same as if I had taken an oath not to tell. You might put me to the rack, and you would get nothing from my mouth. Good bye; it is lost time for

you and me both.” So saying, she quickly entered the garden, and shut the door. Renzo, having returned her farewell, turned back, with a quiet step, that she might not hear which way he took; but when he got beyond reach of the good woman’s ears, he quickened his pace; in a moment he was at Don Abbondio’s door, entered, went straight to the room in which he had left him, found him there, and went towards him with a reckless bearing, and eyes glancing anger.

“Eh! eh! what new thing is this?” said Don Abbondio.

“Who is that tyrant,” said Renzo, with the voice of a man who is determined to obtain a precise reply, “Who is the tyrant who is unwilling that I should marry Lucia?”

“What? what? what?” stammered the astonished poor man, his face in a moment becoming pale, and colourless as a rag just emerged from the washing-tub: then, still stammering, he made a start from his arm-chair, to dart towards the door. But Renzo, who might have expected this movement, was on the alert, sprang there before him, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

“Ah! ah! Will you speak *now*, Signor Curate? Everybody knows my affairs, except myself. But, by Bacchus, I too will know. What is his name?”

“Renzo! Renzo! for charity, take care what you are about; think of your soul.”

“I *am* thinking that I will know it quickly, in a moment.” And as he spoke, perhaps without being aware of it, he laid his hand on the hilt of the dagger which projected from his pocket.

“*Misericordia!*” exclaimed Don Abbondio, in a feeble voice.

“I will know it.”

“Who has told you?”

"No, no; no more trickery. Speak positively and quickly."

"Do you wish me to be killed?"

"I wish to know what I have a right to know."

"But if I speak, I'm a dead man! Surely I'm not to trample on my own life?"

"*Then* speak."

This *then* was pronounced with such energy, and Renzo's face became so threatening, that Don Abbondio could no longer entertain a hope of the possibility of disobedience.

"Promise me—swear to me," said he, "not to speak of it to any one, never to tell"

"I promise you, sir, that I will do an ill deed, if you don't tell me quick—quick, his name!"

At this new adjuration, Don Abbondio, with the face and look of a man who has the pincers of the dentist in his mouth, articulated, "Don"

"Don?" repeated Renzo, as if to help the patient to utter the rest; while he stood bending forward, his ear turned towards the open mouth of Don Abbondio, his arms stretched out, and his clenched fists behind him.

"Don Rodrigo!" hastily uttered the compelled curate, making a rush at these few syllables, and gliding over the consonants, partly through excitement, partly because, exercising the little judgment that was left him, to steer his way betwixt the two fears, it appeared that he wished to withdraw the word and make it invisible at the very moment he was constrained to give utterance to it.

"Ah, dog!" shouted Renzo; "and how has he done it? And what has he said to?"

"How, eh? how?" replied Don Abbondio, in an indignant voice, as it were; feeling, after so great a sacrifice, that he had, in a manner, become a creditor. "How, eh? I wish it had happened to you, as it has to me,

who have not put my foot in it for nothing; for then, certainly, you would not have so many crotchets in your head." And here he began to depict in dreadful colours the terrible encounter. As he proceeded in the description, he began to realize the wrath which hitherto had been concealed, or changed into fear; and perceiving at the same time that Renzo, between anger and confusion, stood motionless, with his head downwards, he continued triumphantly: "You have done a pretty deed! Nice treatment you have given me! To serve such a trick to an honest man, to your curate—in his own house—in a sacred place! You have done a fine action, to force from my lips my own ruin and yours, that which I concealed from you in prudence, for your own good! And now, when you do know it, how much wiser are you? I should like to know what you would have done to me! No joking here, no question of right and wrong, but mere force. And this morning, when I gave you good advice . . . eh! in a rage directly. I had judgment enough for myself, and you too; but how does it go now? Open the door, however; give me my key."

"I may have been wrong," replied Renzo, with a voice softened towards Don Abbondio, but in which suppressed rage against his newly-discovered enemy might be perceived; "I may have been wrong; but put your hand to your heart, and think whether in my case"

So saying, he took the key from his pocket, and went to open the door. Don Abbondio stood behind; and while Renzo turned the key in the lock, he came beside him, and with a serious and anxious face, holding up three fingers of his right hand, as if to help him in his turn, "Swear at least" said he.

"I may have been wrong, and I beg your pardon, sir," answered Renzo, opening the door, and preparing to go out.

“Swear” replied Don Abbondio, seizing him by the arm with a trembling hand.

“I may have been wrong,” repeated Renzo, as he extricated himself from him, and departed with vehement haste, thus cutting short a discussion which, like many a question of philosophy, or literature, or something else, might have been prolonged six centuries, since each party did nothing but repeat his own arguments.

“Perpetua!—Perpetua!” cried Don Abbondio, after having in vain called back the fugitive. Perpetua answered not: Don Abbondio then lost all consciousness of where he was.

It has happened more than once to personages of much greater importance than Don Abbondio, to find themselves in extremities so trying to the flesh, in such perplexity of plans, that it has appeared to them their best resource to go to bed with a fever. This resource Don Abbondio had not to seek for, because it offered itself to him of its own accord. The fright of the day before, the harassing sleeplessness of the night, the additional fright in the morning, anxiety about the future, had produced this effect. Perplexed and bewildered, he rested himself on his arm-chair; he began to feel a certain quaking of the bones; he looked at his nails and sighed, and called from time to time, with a tremulous and anxious voice—“Perpetua!” Perpetua arrived at length, with a great cabbage under her arm, and a business-like face, as if nothing had been the matter. I spare the reader the lamentations, condolences, accusations, defences, the—“You only can have spoken,” and the—“I have not spoken”—all the recriminations, in short, of this colloquy. Let it suffice to say, that Don Abbondio ordered Perpetua to fasten the doors well; not to put foot outside; and if any one knocked, to answer from the window, that the curate

was confined to his bed with a fever. He then slowly ascended the stairs, repeating at every third step, "I have caught it!" and really went to bed, where we will leave him.

Renzo, meanwhile, walked with an excited step towards home, without having determined what he ought to do, but with a mad longing to do something strange and terrible. The unjust and oppressive, all those, in fact, who wrong others, are guilty, not only of the evil they do, but also of the perversion of mind they cause in those whom they offend. Renzo was a young man of peaceful disposition, and averse to violence; sincere, and one who abhorred deceit; but at this moment, his heart panted for murder: his mind was occupied only in devising a plot. He would have wished to hasten to Don Rodrigo's house, to seize him by the throat, and . . . but he remembered that his house was like a fortress, garrisoned with braves within, and guarded without; that only friends and servants, well known, could enter freely, without being searched from head to foot; that an artisan, if unknown, could not put foot within it without an examination; and that he, above all . . . he probably would be too well known. He then fancied himself taking his fowling-piece, planting himself behind a hedge, looking out whether his enemy would ever, ever pass by, unaccompanied; and dwelling with ferocious complacency on this thought, he imagined the sound of a step; at this sound he raises his head without noise; recognises the wretch, raises the fowling-piece, takes aim—fires; sees him fall and struggle, bestows a malediction on him, and escapes in safety beyond the borders.—And Lucia?—Scarcely had this word come across these dreadful phantasies, when the better thoughts, with which Renzo was familiarized, crowded into his mind. He recalled the dying charge of his parents. The thought of God, of the Blessed

Virgin, and of the saints, returned upon him ; he remembered the consolation he had so often experienced from the recollection that he was free from crimes ; he remembered the horror with which he had so often received the news of a murder ; and he awoke from this dream of blood with fear, with remorse, and yet with a sort of joy that he had but imagined it. But the thought of Lucia—how many thoughts it brought along with it ! So many hopes, so many promises, a future so bright, so secure, and this day so longed for ! And how, with what words announce to her such news ? And afterwards, what was to be done ? How were their plans to be accomplished, in spite of this powerful and wicked enemy ? Along with all this, not a defined suspicion, but a tormenting shadow flitted every moment through his mind. This overbearing act of Don Rodrigo could have no motive but a lawless passion for Lucia. And Lucia ! could she have given him the smallest encouragement, the most distant hope ? It was a thought which could not dwell for an instant in his mind. But was she aware of it ? Could he have conceived this infamous passion without her perceiving it ? Could he have carried matters so far, without having made an attempt in some other manner ? And Lucia had never mentioned a word of it to him, her betrothed !

Overcome by these thoughts, he passed by his own house, which was situated in the middle of the village, and proceeding through it, came to that of Lucia, which stood at the opposite end. This cottage had a little garden in front, which separated it from the road ; and the garden was surrounded by a low wall. As Renzo entered the garden, he heard a confused and continual murmur of voices from an upper room. He supposed it was friends and companions come to greet Lucia ; and he did not wish to show himself to this company with the sad news he had to communicate visible in his face.

A little girl, who happened to be in the garden, ran to meet him, crying, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!"

"Gently, Bettina, gently!" said Renzo. "Come here; go up to Lucia, take her on one side and whisper in her ear but mind no one hears, or suspects tell her I want to speak to her, and that I'm waiting in the down-stairs room, and that she must come immediately." The child ran quickly up stairs, delighted and proud to be entrusted with a secret.

Lucia had just come forth adorned from head to foot by the hands of her mother. Her friends were stealing glances at the bride, and foreing her to show herself; while she, with the somewhat warlike modesty of a rustic, was endeavouring to escape, using her arms as a shield for her face, and holding her head downwards, her black pencilled eyebrows seeming to frown, while her lips were smiling. Her dark and luxuriant hair, divided on her forehead with a white and narrow parting, was united behind in many-circled plaitings, pierced with long silver pins, disposed around, so as to look like an aureola, or saintly glory, a fashion still in use among the Milanese peasant-girls. Round her neck she had a necklace of garnets, alternated with beads of filagree gold. She wore a pretty boddice of flowered brocade, laced with coloured ribbons, a short gown of embroidered silk, plaited in close and minute folds, scarlet stockings, and a pair of shoes also of embroidered silk. Besides these, which were the special ornaments of her wedding-day, Lucia had the every-day ornament of a modest beauty, displayed at this time, and increased by the varied feelings which were depicted in her face: joy tempered by a slight confusion, that placid sadness which occasionally shows itself on the face of a bride, and without injuring her beauty, gives it an air peculiar to itself. The little Bettina made her way among the talkers, came close up to Lucia, cleverly made her

understand that she had something to communicate, and whispered her little message in her ear. "I am going for a moment, and will be back directly," said Lucia to her friends, and hastily descended the stairs.

On seeing the changed look and the unquiet manner of Renzo, "What is the matter?" she exclaimed, not without a presentiment of terror.

"Lucia!" replied Renzo, "it is all up for to-day; and God knows when we can be man and wife."

"What?" said Lucia, altogether amazed. Renzo briefly related to her the events of the morning; she listened in great distress; and when she heard the name of Don Rodrigo, "Ah!" she exclaimed, blushing and trembling, "has it come to this point!"

"Then you knew it?" said Renzo.

"Indeed too well," answered Lucia, "but to this point!"

"What did you know about it?"

"Don't make me speak now, don't make me cry. I will run and call my mother, and send away the girls. We must be alone."

While she was going, Renzo murmured, "You never told me anything about it."

"Ah, Renzo!" replied Lucia, turning round for a moment without stopping. Renzo understood very well that his name so pronounced by Lucia, at that moment, in such a tone, meant to say, Can *you* doubt that I could be silent, except on just and pure motives?

By this time the good Agnese (so Lucia's mother was named), incited to suspicion and curiosity by the whisper in her ear,—had come down to see what was the matter. Her daughter, leaving her with Renzo, returned to the assembled maidens, and, composing her voice and manner as well as she could, said, "The Signor Curate is ill, and nothing will be done to-day." This said, she hastily bid them good bye, and went

down again. The company departed, and dispersed themselves through the village, to recount what had happened, and to discover whether Don Abbondio was really ill. The truth of the fact cut short all the conjectures which had already begun to work in their minds, and to be discovered undefined and mysteriously in their words.



CHAPTER III.

WHILE Renzo was relating with pain what Agnese with pain listened to, Lucia entered the room. They both turned towards her: she indeed knew more about it than they, and of her they awaited an explanation which could not but be distressing. In the midst of their sorrow they both, according to the different nature of the love they bore Lucia, discovered in their own manner a degree of anger that she had concealed anything from them, especially of such a nature. Agnese, although anxious to hear her daughter speak, could not refrain from a slight reproof, "To say nothing to your mother in such a case!"

"Now I will tell you all," answered Lucia, as she dried her eyes with her apron.

“Speak, speak!—Speak, speak!” at once cried both mother and lover.

“Most Holy Virgin!” exclaimed Lucia, “who could have believed it would have come to this!” Then with a voice tremulous with weeping, she related how, as she was returning from her spinning, and had loitered behind her companions, Don Rodrigo, in company with another gentleman, had passed by her; that he had tried to engage her in foolish talk, as she called it; but she, without giving him an answer, had quickened her pace, and joined her companions; then she had heard the other gentleman laugh loudly, and Don Rodrigo say, “I’ll lay you a wager.” The next day they were again on the road, but Lucia was in the midst of her companions with her eyes on the ground; when the other gentleman laughed, and Don Rodrigo said, “We shall see, we shall see.” “This day,” continued Lucia, “thank God, was the last of the spinning. I related immediately . . .”

“Who was it you told it to?” demanded Agnese, waiting, not without a little displeasure, for the name of the confidante who had been preferred.

“To father Cristoforo, in confession, mamma,” replied Lucia, with a sweet tone of apology. “I related the whole to him, the last time we went to church together, at the convent: and if you noticed, that morning I kept putting my hand to one thing and another, to pass the time till other people were on the road, that we might go in company with them; because after that meeting, the roads make me so frightened.”

At the reverend name of father Cristoforo, the wrath of Agnese subsided. “You did well,” said she; “but why not tell all to your mother also?”

Lucia had had two good reasons: one not to distress and frighten the good woman, about an event against which she could have found no remedy; the other not

to run the risk of a story travelling from mouth to mouth, which she wished to be kept with jealous silence; the more so because Lucia hoped that her marriage would have cut short at the beginning this abominated persecution. Of these two reasons she alleged only the first. "And to you," said she, turning to Renzo, with that tone which reminds a friend that he is unreasonable: "And to you *could* I speak about this? Surely you know too much of it now!"

"And what did the father say to you?" asked Agnese.

"He told me that I must try to hasten the wedding as much as I could, and in the mean time to keep myself within doors; that I should pray to the Lord; and he hoped that this man, if he did not see me, would not care any more about me. And it was then that I forced myself," continued she, turning again towards Renzo, without however raising her eyes, and blushing to the temples, "it was then that I put on a too-bold face, and begged you to get it done soon, and have it concluded before the fixed time. Who knows what you must have thought of me! But I did it for good, and it was advised me, and I thought for certain . . . and this morning I was so far from thinking . . ."

Here Lucia's words were cut short by a violent burst of tears.

"Ah, rascal! wretch! murderer!" exclaimed Renzo, striding backwards and forwards across the room, and grasping from time to time the hilt of his dagger.

"Oh, heavens, what a fury!" exclaimed Agnese. The young man suddenly drew himself up before Lucia, who was weeping, looked at her with an anxious and imbittered tenderness, and said, "This is the last deed this assassin shall do."

"Ah, no, Renzo, for Heaven's sake!" cried Lucia; "no, no, for Heaven's sake! God is on the side of the

poor, and how can we expect him to help us if we do wrong?"

"No, no, for Heaven's sake!" echoed Agnese.

"Renzo," said Lucia, with an air of hope and more tranquil resolution, "you have a trade, and I know how to work; let us go so far off that this man will hear no more about us."

"Ah, Lucia! and what then? We are not yet man and wife! Will the curate give us a certificate of no impediment, such a man as he is? If we were married, Oh then!"

Lucia began to weep again, and all three remained silent, giving signs of depression which contrasted strangely with the festive gaiety of their dress.

"Listen, my children; attend to me," said Agnese, after some moments; "I came into the world long before you; and I know something about the world. You need not frighten yourselves too much: things are not so bad as people make out. To us poor people the skein seems more entangled because we cannot get hold of the right end; but sometimes a piece of good advice, a little talk with a man who has got learning I know well enough what I would say. Do as I tell you, Renzo; go to Lecco, seek for Dr. Azzecca-Garbugli,* tell him all about it,—but mind you don't call him so, for Heaven's sake: it's a nick-name. You must tell the Signor Doctor—What in the world do they call him? Oh dear! I don't know his right name: everybody calls him so. Never mind, seek for this doctor; he is tall, thin, bald, with a red nose and a raspberry-coloured mole on his cheek."

"I know him by sight," said Renzo.

"Well," continued Agnese, "he *is* a man! I have seen more than one person, bothered like a chicken in a bundle of hemp, and who did not know where to put

* *I. e.* a picker of quarrels.

his head, and after being an hour nose to nose with the Dr. Azzecca-Garbugli, (take good care *you* don't call him so)—I have seen him, I say, make a joke of it. Take these four capons, poor creatures ! whose necks I ought to have wrung for to-night's supper, and carry them to him ; because we must never go empty-handed to these gentlemen. Relate to him all that has happened, and you'll see he will tell you, in a twinkling, things which would not come into our heads if we were to think about them for a year."

Renzo willingly embraced this counsel ; Lucia approved it ; and Agnese, proud of having given it, took the poor creatures one by one from the hen-coop, united their eight legs, as one makes up a bunch of flowers, tied them up with a piece of string, and consigned them to the hands of Renzo, who, after giving and receiving words of encouragement and hope, went out by a little gate from the garden, that he might escape the observation of the boys, who would have run after him, crying, "The bridegroom ! the bridegroom !" Thus, having crossed the fields, or, as they call them there, *the places*, he continued his route along narrow lanes, giving utterance to his bitter thoughts, as he reflected on his misfortune, and considering what he must say to the Dr. Azzecca-Garbugli. I leave it to the reader to think how the journey was enjoyed by those poor creatures, so bound together, and held by the feet with their heads downwards, in the hand of a man who, agitated by so many passions, accompanied with appropriate gestures the thoughts which rushed tumultuously through his mind ; and in moments of anger or determination, suddenly extending his arm, inflicted terrible shocks upon them, and caused those four pendant heads to *bob* violently, if we may be allowed the expression ; they, meanwhile, vigorously applying themselves to peck each other, as too often happens among friends in adversity.

Arriving at the village, he inquired for the Doctor's house, and when it was pointed out to him, quickly made his way thither. On approaching it, however, he began to feel that bashfulness so usual with the poor and ignorant in the presence of a gentleman or man of learning, and forgot all the fine speeches he had prepared; but a glance at the chickens he carried in his hand restored his courage. He went into the kitchen, and asked the maid-servant if he could see the Signor Doctor. The woman looked at the birds, and, as if accustomed to such presents, was about to take them in her hand, but Renzo held them back, because he wanted the Doctor to see he had brought something with him. Just at this moment, the wished-for personage made his appearance, as the servant was saying, "Give them here, and go forward to the study." Renzo made a low bow to the Doctor, who graciously bid him "Come in, my son," and took him into his study. It was a large room, decorated on three sides with portraits of the twelve Cæsars; the remaining wall was hidden by a large bookcase, filled with old and dusty books: in the middle of the room stood a table covered with extracts, petitions, libels and proclamations: three or four chairs were scattered around, and on one side was a large arm-chair, with a high square back, terminating at the corners in two hornshaped ornaments of wood, and covered with leather, fastened down with large nails. Some of these had fallen out, so that the leather curled up here and there at pleasure, leaving the corners unincumbered. The Doctor was in his dressing-gown; that is to say, he had on a faded robe, which had served him for many years to harangue in on days of state, when he went to Milan on any important cause. Having shut the door, he re-animated the young man's confidence with these words: "Tell me your case, my son."

"I wish to speak a word to you in confidence."

"I'm ready—speak," replied the Doctor, seating himself on his arm-chair.

Renzo stood before the table, and twirling his hat with his right hand round the other, continued: "I want to know from you, who have studied"

"Tell me the case as it is," interrupted the Doctor.

"Excuse me, Signor Doctor: we poor people don't know how to speak properly. I want, then, to know"

"Blessed set you are! You are all alike. Instead of relating your case, you ask questions, because you've already made up your minds."

"I beg your pardon, Signor Doctor. I want to know if there's any punishment for threatening a curate, and forbidding him to celebrate a marriage?"

"I understand," muttered the doctor, who in truth had not understood; "I understand." He then put on a serious face; but it was a seriousness mingled with an air of compassion and importance; and, pressing his lips, he uttered an inarticulate sound, betokening a sentiment, afterwards more clearly expressed in his first words. "A serious case, my son. There are laws to the point. You have done well to come to me. It is a clear case, recognised in a hundred proclamations, and stay! in an edict of the last year, by the present Signor Governor. I'll let you see it and handle it directly."

So saying, he rose from his seat, and hunted through the chaos of papers, *shovelling* the lower ones uppermost with his hands, as if he were throwing corn into a measure.

"Where can it be? Come nearer, come nearer. One is obliged to have so many things in hand! But it must surely be here, for it is a proclamation of importance. Ah! here it is, here it is!" He took it, unfolded it, looked at the date, and with a still more serious face, continued, "The fifteenth of October, 1627. Certainly;

it is last year's ; a fresh proclamation ; it is these that cause such fear. Can you read, my son ?”

“ A little, Signor Doctor.”

“ Very well, follow me with your eye, and you shall see.”

And holding the edict displayed in the air, he began to read, rapidly muttering some passages, and pausing distinctly, with marked emphasis, upon others, as the case required.

“ Although in the proclamation published by order of the Signor Duke of Fera, the 14th December, 1620, and confirmed by the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Signor, the Signor Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, &c., there was provision made, by extraordinary and rigorous measures, against oppressions, commotions, and tyrannical acts that some persons dare to commit against the devoted subjects of his Majesty ; nevertheless, the frequency of crimes and violences, &c. has increased to such a degree, that his Excellency is under the necessity, &c. Wherefore, with the concurrence of the Senate and a Council, &c., he has resolved to publish the present edict.

“ And, to begin with tyrannical acts, experience showing, that many, as well in cities, as in the country, Do you hear ? excite commotions in this state by violence, and oppress the weak in various ways, as, for example, by compelling them to make hard bargains in purchases, rents, &c., where am I ? ah ! here ! look—to perform or not to perform marriages ; eh !”

“ That is my case,” said Renzo.

“ Listen, listen ; there is plenty more ; and then we shall see the penalty. *To give evidence, or not to give evidence ; compelling one to leave his home, &c., another to pay a debt : all this has nothing to do with us. Ah ! we have it here ; this priest not to perform that to which he is obliged by his office, or to do things which do not belong to him. Eh !”*

"It seems as if they had made the edict exactly for me."

"Eh! is it not so? listen, listen: *and similar oppressions, whether perpetrated by feudatories, the nobility, middle ranks, lower orders, or plebeians.* No one escapes: they are all here: it is like the valley of Jehoshaphat. Listen now to the penalty. *All these, and other such like criminal acts, although they are prohibited, nevertheless, it being necessary to use greater rigour, his Excellency, not relenting in this proclamation, &c., enjoins and commands that against all offenders under any of the above-mentioned heads, or the like, all the ordinary magistrates of the state shall proceed, by pecuniary and corporal punishment, by banishment or the galleys, and even by death a mere bagatelle! at the will of his Excellency or of the Senate, according to the character of the cases, persons, and circumstances. And this IR-RE-MIS-SI-BLY, and with all rigour, &c.* There's plenty of it here, eh? And see, here's the signature: *Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova*: and lower down; *Platonus*; and here again; *Vidit Ferrer*: there's nothing wanting."

While the Doctor was reading, Renzo slowly followed him with his eye, trying to draw out the simple meaning, and to behold for himself those blessed words, which he believed were to render him assistance. The Doctor, seeing his new client more attentive than alarmed, was greatly surprised. He must be matriculated, said he to himself—"Ah! ah!" added he aloud; "you have been obliged to shave off the lock. You have been prudent: however you need not have done so, when putting yourself under my hands. The case is serious; but you don't know what I have courage to do in a time of need."

To understand this mistake of the Doctor's, it must be known, that at that time, bravoos by profession, and villains of every kind, used to wear a long lock of hair,

which they drew over the face like a visor on meeting any one, when the occasion was one which rendered disguise necessary, and the undertaking such as required both force and circumspection.

The proclamation had not been silent with regard to this matter. "*His Excellency* (the Marquis of La Hynojosa) commands that whosoever shall wear his hair of such a length as to cover his forehead as far as the eyebrows only, or shall wear tresses either before or behind the ears, shall incur the penalty of three hundred crowns; or in case of inability, three years in the galleys for the first offence, and for the second, besides the above, a severer penalty still, at the will of his Excellency.

"However, in case of baldness or other reasonable cause, as a mark or wound, he gives permission to such, for their greater decorum or health, to wear their hair so long as may be necessary to cover such failings, and no more; warning them well to beware of exceeding the limits of duty and pure necessity, that they may not incur the penalty imposed upon other dissemblers.

"And he also commands all barbers, under penalty of a hundred crowns, or three stripes, to be given them in public, and even greater corporal punishment, at the will of his Excellency, as above, that they leave not on those whom they shave, any kind of the said tresses, locks, curls, or hair, longer than usual, either on the forehead, temples, or behind the ears; but that they shall be all of equal length, as above, except in case of baldness, or other defects, as already described." The lock, then, might almost be considered a part of the armour, and a distinctive mark of braves and vagabonds; so that these characters very commonly bore the name of *Ciuffi*.* This term is still used, with a mitigated signification, in the dialect of the country; and, perhaps, there is not one of our Milanese readers who does not remember hearing it said of him, in his

* i. e. Locks.

childhood, either by his relatives, his tutor, or some family friend, "He is a *Ciuffo*; he is a *Ciuffetto*."

"On the word of a poor youth," replied Renzo, "I never wore a lock in my life."

"I can do nothing," replied the Doctor, shaking his head, with a smile between malice and impatience. "If you don't trust me, I can do nothing. He who tells lies to the lawyer, do you see, my son, is a fool who will tell the truth to the judge. People must relate matters clearly to the advocate: it is our business to make them intricate. If you wish me to help you, you must tell me all from *a* to *z*, with your heart in your hand, as if to your confessor. You must name the person who has employed you. He will most likely be a person of consequence; and, in that case, I will go to him to perform an act of duty. I shan't, however, tell him, do you see, that *you* told me he had sent you, trust me. I will tell him I come to implore his protection for a poor slandered youth, and will take all necessary measures with him to finish the affair commendably. You understand, that, in securing himself, he will also secure you. Even if the scrape be all your own, I won't go back; I have extricated others from worse predicaments. And if you have not offended a person of quality, you understand, I will engage to get you out of the difficulty—with a little expense, you understand. You must tell me who is the offended party, as they say; and, according to the condition, rank, and temper, of the person, we shall see whether it will be better to bring him to reason by offers of protection, or, in some way, to criminate him, and put a flea in his ear; because, you see, I know very well how to manage these edicts; no one must be guilty, and no one must be innocent. As to the curate, if he has any discretion, he will keep in the back-ground; if he is a simpleton, we will dispose of him too. One can escape from any intrigue;

but it requires one to act like a man ; and your case is serious—serious, I say, serious ; the edict speaks clearly ; and if the matter were to be decided between justice and you, to say the truth, it would go hard with you. I speak to you as a friend. One must pay for pranks ; if you wish to get off clear, money and frankness—trust yourself to one who wishes you well ; obey, and do all that is suggested to you.”

While the Doctor poured forth this rhapsody, Renzo stood looking at him, with the spell-bound attention of a labouring man watching a juggler in the street, who, after thrusting into his mouth handful after handful of tow, draws forth thence ribbon—ribbon—ribbon—seemingly without end. When, at last, he understood what the Doctor was saying, and the strange mistake he had made, he cut short the ribbon in his mouth with these words : “ Oh, Signor Doctor, how have you understood me ? The case is exactly the other way. I have threatened no one ; I never do such things, not I ; ask all my neighbours, and you will hear I have never had anything to do with the law. The trick has been played upon *me* ; and I came to ask you what I must do to get justice, and I am very glad that I have seen this edict.”

“ Hang him ! ” exclaimed the Doctor, opening his eyes. “ What a medley you have made ! So it is : you are all alike ; is it possible you don’t know how to tell things plainly ? ”

“ I beg your pardon, Signor Doctor, you didn’t give me time ; now I will relate the case as it is. You must know, then, that I was to have married to-day,” and here Renzo’s voice became tremulous—“ I was to have married to-day a young woman to whom I have paid my addresses since the beginning of summer ; and this was the day, as I said, that was fixed with the Signor Curate, and everything was ready. Well, this morning,

the Signor Curate began to throw out some excuses however, not to tire you, I will only say, I made him speak, as was but just; and he confessed that he had been forbidden, under pain of death, to celebrate this marriage. This tyrant of a Don Rodrigo”

“Get you gone!” quickly interrupted the Doctor, raising his eyebrows, wrinkling his red nose, and distorting his mouth; “get you gone! Why do you come here to rack my brain with these lies? Talk in this way to your companions, who don’t know the meaning of words, and don’t come and utter them to a gentleman who knows well what they are worth. Go away, go away; you don’t know what you are talking about; I don’t meddle with boys; I don’t want to hear talk of this sort: talk in the air.”

“I will take an oath”

“Get you gone, I tell you; what do I care for your oaths! I won’t enter into the business; I wash my hands of it.” And he began rubbing and twirling them one over the other, as if he were really washing them. “Learn how to speak; and don’t come and take a gentleman thus by surprise.”

“But listen — but listen,” vainly repeated Renzo. The Doctor, fuming all the time, pushed him towards the door, and, on reaching it, set it wide open, called the servant, and said, “Be quick, and give this man what he brought. I want nothing, I want nothing.” The woman had never before executed a similar order all the time she had been in the Doctor’s service; but it was pronounced in so resolute a manner, that she did not hesitate to obey. So, taking the four poor birds, she gave them to Renzo, with a look of contemptuous compassion, which seemed to say, ‘you must indeed have made a grand blunder.’ Renzo tried to be ceremonious, but the Doctor was inexorable; and the unhappy wight, astonished and bewildered, and more wrathful than

ever, was compelled to take back the restored victims, and return to the country to relate the pleasing result of his expedition to Agnese and Lucia.

During his absence, after sorrowfully changing their nuptial robes for the humble daily dress, they had set themselves to consult anew, Lucia sobbing, Agnese sighing mournfully, from time to time. When Agnese had sufficiently enlarged upon the great effects they might hope for from the Doctor's advice, Lucia remarked, that they ought to try every method likely to assist them; that Father Cristoforo was a man not only to advise, but also to render more effectual assistance, where it concerned the poor and unfortunate; and that it would be a good thing if they could let him know what had happened.

"It would, indeed," replied Agnese; and they began immediately to contrive together some plan to accomplish it; since, to go themselves to the convent, distant, perhaps, two miles, was an undertaking they would rather not risk *that* day; and, certainly, no one with any judgment would have advised them to do so. While, however, they were thus engaged in weighing the different sides of the question, they heard a knock at the door; and at the same moment, a low but distinct *Deo Gratias*. Lucia, wondering who it could be, ran to open it, and immediately, making a low bow, there entered a lay Capuchin collector, his bag hanging over his left shoulder, and the mouth of it twisted and held tight in his two hands, over his breast. "Oh, brother Galdino!" exclaimed the two women. "The Lord be with you," said the friar; "I have come to beg for the nuts."

"Go and fetch the nuts for the Fathers," said Agnese. Lucia arose, and moved towards the other room; but, before entering it, she paused behind the friar's back, who remained standing in exactly the same position;

and putting her fore-finger on her lips, gave her mother a look demanding secrecy, in which were mingled tenderness, supplication, and even a certain air of authority.

The collector, inquisitively eyeing Agnese at a distance, said, "And this wedding? I thought it was to have been to-day; but I noticed a stir in the neighbourhood, as if indicating something new. What has happened?"

"The Signor Curate is ill, and we are obliged to postpone it," hastily replied Agnese. Probably the answer might have been very different, if Lucia had not given her the hint. "And how does the collection go on?" added she, wishing to change the conversation.

"Badly, good woman, badly. They are all here." And so saying, he took the wallet off his shoulders, and tossed it up between his hands into the air. "They are all here; and to collect this mighty abundance, I have had to knock at ten doors."

"But the year is scarce, brother Galdino; and when one has to struggle for bread, one measures everything according to the scarcity."

"And what must we do, good woman, to make better times return? Give alms. Don't you know the miracle of the nuts that happened many years ago in our Convent of Romagna?"

"No, indeed! tell me."

"Well, you must know, then, that in our convent, there was a holy Father, whose name was Father Macario. One day, in winter, walking along a narrow path, in a field belonging to one of our benefactors—a good man also—Father Macario saw him standing near a large walnut-tree, and four peasants, with axes upraised, about to fell it, having laid bare its roots to the sun. 'What are you doing to this poor tree?' asked Father Macario. 'Why, Father, it has borne no fruit

for many years, so now I will make firing of it.' 'Leave it, leave it,' said the Father; 'be assured this year it will produce more fruit than leaves.' The benefactor, knowing who it was that had uttered these words, immediately ordered the workmen to throw the soil upon the roots again; and calling to the Father, who continued his walk, said, 'Father Macario, half of the crop shall be for the convent.' The report of the prophecy spread, and every one flocked to see the tree. Spring, in very truth, brought blossoms without number, and then followed nuts—nuts without number. The good benefactor had not the happiness of gathering them, for he went before the harvest to receive the reward of his charity. But the miracle was, in consequence, so much the greater, as you will hear. This worthy man left behind him a son of very different character. Well, then, at the time of gathering, the collector went to receive the moiety belonging to the convent; but the son pretended perfect ignorance of the matter, and had the temerity to reply, that he had never heard that Capuchins knew how to gather nuts. What do you think happened then? One day, (listen to this,) the knave was entertaining a party of his friends, of the same genus as himself, and while making merry, he related the story of the walnuts, and ridiculed the friars. His jovial friends wished to go see this wonderful heap of nuts, and he conducted them to the storehouse. But listen now; he opened the door, went towards the corner where the great heap had been laid, and while saying, 'Look,' he looked himself, and saw—what do you think?—a magnificent heap of withered walnut-leaves! This was a lesson for him; and the convent, instead of being a loser by the denied alms, gained thereby; for, after so great a miracle, the contribution of nuts increased to such a degree, that a benefactor, moved with pity for the poor collector, made a present to the con-

vent of an ass, to assist in carrying the nuts home. And so much oil was made, that all the poor in the neighbourhood came and had as much as they required; for we are like the sea, which receives water from all quarters, and returns it to be again distributed through the rivers."

At this moment Lucia returned, her apron so laden with nuts, that it was with difficulty she could manage it, holding the two corners stretched out at arm's length, while the friar Galdino lifted the sack off his shoulders, and putting it on the ground, opened the mouth for the reception of the abundant gift. Agnese glanced towards Lucia a surprised and reproachful look for her prodigality; but Lucia returned a glance which seemed to say, 'I will justify myself.' The friar broke forth into praises, prognostications, promises, and expressions of gratitude, and replacing his bag, was about to depart. But Lucia, recalling him, said, "I want you to do me a kindness; I want you to tell Father Cristoforo that we earnestly wish to speak to him, and ask him to be so good as come to us poor people quickly—directly; for I cannot go to the church."

"Is this all? It shall not be an hour before Father Cristoforo knows your wish."

"I believe you."

"You need not fear." And so saying, he departed, rather more burdened and a little better satisfied than when he entered the house.

Let no one think, on hearing that a poor girl sent to ask with such confidence for Father Cristoforo, and that the collector accepted the commission without wonder and without difficulty—let no one, I say, suppose that this Cristoforo was a mean friar—a person of no importance. He was, on the contrary, a man who had great authority among his friends, and in the country around;

but, such was the condition of the Capuchins, that nothing appeared to them either too high or too low. To minister to the basest, and to be ministered to by the most powerful; to enter palaces or hovels with the same deportment of humility and security; to be sometimes in the same house the object of ridicule and a person without whom nothing could be decided; to solicit alms everywhere, and distribute them to all those who begged at the convent:—a Capuchin was accustomed to all these. Traversing the road, he was equally liable to meet a noble who would reverently kiss the end of the rope round his waist, or a crowd of wicked boys, who, pretending to be quarrelling among themselves, would fling at his beard dirt and mire. The word *frate* was pronounced in those days with the greatest respect, and again with the bitterest contempt; and the Capuchins, perhaps, more than any other order, were the objects of two directly opposite sentiments, and shared two directly opposite kinds of treatment; because, possessing no property, wearing a more than ordinarily distinctive habit, and making more open professions of humiliation, they exposed themselves more directly to the veneration, or the contumely, which these circumstances would excite, according to the different tempers and different opinions of men.

As soon as the friar had left,—“All those nuts!” exclaimed Agnese: “and in such a year too!”

“I beg pardon, mother,” replied Lucia: “but if we had only given like others, brother Galdino would have had to go about no one knows how long, before his wallet would have been filled; and we cannot tell when he would have returned to the convent; besides, what with chatting here and there, he would very likely have forgotten”

“Ah! you thought wisely; and, after all, charity

always brings a good reward," said Agnese, who, spite of her little defects, was a good woman, and would have given every thing she owned for this only daughter, whom she loved with the tenderest affection.

At this moment Renzo arrived, and, entering with an irritated and mortified countenance, threw the chickens on the table; and this was the last sad vicissitude the poor creatures underwent that day.

"Fine advice you gave me!" said he to Agnese. "You sent me to a *nice* gentleman, to one who really helps the unfortunate!" And he began immediately to relate his reception at the Doctor's. Poor Agnese, astonished at his ill success, endeavoured to prove that her advice had been good, and that Renzo had not gone about the business cleverly; but Lucia interrupted the question, by announcing that she hoped they had found a better helper. Renzo welcomed the hope as most people do who are in misfortune and perplexity. "But if the Father," said he, "does not find us a remedy, I will find one somehow or other." The women recommended peace, patience, and prudence. "To-morrow," said Lucia, "Father Cristoforo will certainly come, and you'll see he will find some help that we poor people can't even imagine."

"I hope so," said Renzo; "but in any case I will get redress, or find some one to get it for me. There must be justice in the end, even in this world!"

In such melancholy discourse, and in such occurrences as have been described, the day wore away, and began to decline.

"Good night," said Lucia, sorrowfully, to Renzo, who could not make up his mind to leave her. "Good night," replied he, still more mournfully.

"Some saint will help us," added she. "Be prudent, and try to be resigned." Agnese added other advice

of the same kind, and the bridegroom went away with fury in his heart, repeating all the while those strange words, "There must be justice at last, even in this world!" So true is it that a man overwhelmed with great sorrows knows not what he is saying.





CHAPTER IV.

THE sun had scarcely risen above the horizon, when Father Cristoforo left the convent of Pescarenico, and proceeded towards the cottage where he was expected. Pescarenico is a little town on the left bank of the Adda, or rather, we should say, of the lake, a few paces below the bridge; a group of houses, inhabited for the most part by fishermen, and adorned here and there with nets hung out to dry. The convent was situated (and the building still remains) outside the town, facing the entrance, on the road that leads from Lecco to Bergamo. The sky was serene, and as the sun gradually emerged from behind the mountain, the light descended from the summit of the opposite range, spreading itself rapidly over the steeps and through the valleys; while a soft autumnal breeze, shaking from the boughs the withered

leaves of the mulberry, carried them away to fall at some distance from the tree. In the vineyards on either hand, the red leaves of various shades glittered on the still festooned branches; and the newly-made nets appeared dark and distinct among the fields of white stubble sparkling in the dew. The scene was bright; but the occasional sight of a human figure moving therein dispelled the cheerful thoughts which the scene was calculated to inspire. At every step one met with pale and emaciated beggars, either grown old in the business, or reduced by the necessity of the times to ask alms. They looked piteously at Father Cristoforo as they silently passed him; and although, as a Capuchin never had any money, they had nothing to hope from him, yet they gave him a bow of gratitude for the alms which they had received, or were going to solicit, at the convent. The sight of the labourers scattered over the fields had in it something still more mournful. Some were sowing seed, but niggardly and unwillingly, like a man who risks something he highly prizes: others could with difficulty use the spade, and wearily overturned the sods. The half-starved child, holding by a cord the thin and meagre cow, and looking narrowly around, hastily stooped to steal from it some herb as food for the family, which hunger had taught them could be used to sustain life. Such sights as these at every step increased the sadness of the friar, who even now had a presentiment in his heart that he was going to hear of some misfortune.

But why did he take so much thought for Lucia? And why at the first intimation of her wish, did he attend to it so diligently, as if it were a call from the Father Provincial? And who was this Father Cristoforo?—It will be necessary to answer all these inquiries.

Father Cristoforo of * * * * was a man nearer sixty

than fifty years of age. His shaven head, circled with a narrow line of hair, like a crown, according to the fashion of the Capuchin tonsure, was raised from time to time with a movement that betrayed somewhat of disdain and disquietude, and then quickly sank again in thoughts of lowliness and humility. His long, grey beard covering his cheeks and chin, contrasted markedly with the prominent features of the upper part of his face, to which a long and habitual abstinence had rather given an air of gravity, than effaced the natural expression. His sunken eyes, usually bent on the ground, sometimes brightened up with a momentary fire, like two spirited horses, under the hand of a driver whom they know by experience they cannot overcome; yet occasionally they indulge in a few gambols and praneings, for which they are quickly repaid by a smart jerk of the bit.

Father Cristoforo had not always been thus: nor had he always been Cristoforo: his baptismal name was Ludovico. He was the son of a merchant of * * * *, (these asterisks are all inserted by the circumspection of our anonymous author,) who, in his latter years, being considerably wealthy, and having only one son, had given up trade, and retired as an independent gentleman.

In his new state of idleness he began to entertain a great contempt for the time he had spent in making money, and being useful in the world. Full of this fancy, he used every endeavour to make others forget that he had been a merchant; in fact, he wished to forget it himself. But the warehouse, the bales, the journal, the measure, were for ever intruding upon his mind, like the shade of Banquo to Macbeth, even amidst the honours of the table and the smiles of flatterers. It is impossible to describe the care of these poor mortals to avoid every word that might appear like an

allusion to the former condition of their patron. One day, to mention a single instance, towards the end of dinner, in the moment of liveliest and most unrestrained festivity, when it would be difficult to say which was merriest, the company who emptied the table, or the host who filled it, he was rallying with friendly superiority one of his guests, the most prodigious eater in the world. He, meaning to return the joke, with the frankness of a child, and without the least shade of malice, replied, "Ah, I'm listening like a merchant."* The poor offender was at once conscious of the unfortunate word that had escaped his lips; he cast a diffident glance towards his patron's clouded face, and each would gladly have resumed his former expression; but it was impossible. The other guests occupied themselves, each in his own mind, in devising some plan of remedying the mistake, and making a diversion; but the silence thus occasioned only made the error more apparent. Each individual endeavoured to avoid meeting his companion's eye; each felt that all were occupied in the thought they wished to conceal. Cheerfulness and sociability had fled for that day, and the poor man, not so much imprudent as unfortunate, never again received an invitation. In this manner, Ludovico's father passed his latter years, continually subject to annoyances, and perpetually in dread of being despised; never reflecting that it was no more contemptuous to sell than to buy, and that the business of which he was now so much ashamed, had been carried on for many years before the public without regret. He gave his son an expensive education, according to the judgment of the times, and as far as he was permitted by the laws and customs of the country; he procured him masters in the different

* "*Io faccio orecchie da mercante.*" A proverbial expression, meaning, "I pay no attention to you," which quite loses its point when translated into English.

branches of literature and in exercises of horsemanship, and at last died, leaving the youth heir to a large fortune. Ludovico had acquired gentlemanly habits and feelings, and the flatterers by whom he had been surrounded had accustomed him to be treated with the greatest respect. But when he endeavoured to mix with the first men of the city, he met with very different treatment to what he had been accustomed to, and he began to perceive that, if he would be admitted into their society, as he desired, he must learn, in a new school, to be patient and submissive, and every moment to be looked down upon and despised.

Such a mode of life accorded neither with the education of Ludovico, nor with his disposition, and he withdrew from it, highly piqued. Still he absented himself unwillingly; it appeared to him that these ought really to have been his companions, only he wanted them to be a little more tractable. With this mixture of dislike and inclination, not being able to make them his familiar associates, yet wishing in some way to be connected with them, he endeavoured to rival them in show and magnificence, thus purchasing for himself enmity, jealousy, and ridicule. His disposition, open and at the same time violent, had occasionally engaged him in more serious contentions. He had a natural and sincere horror of fraud and oppression—a horror rendered still more vivid by the rank of those whom he saw daily committing them—exactly the persons he hated. To appease, or to excite all these passions at once, he readily took the part of the weak and oppressed, assumed the office of arbitrator, and intermeddling in one dispute, drew himself into others; so that by degrees he established his character as a protector of the oppressed, and a vindicator of injuries. The employment, however, was troublesome; and it need not be asked whether poor Ludovico met with enemies, untoward

accidents, and vexations of spirit. Besides the external war he had to maintain, he was continually harassed by internal strifes; for, in order to carry out his undertakings, (not to speak of such as never were carried out,) he was often obliged to make use of subterfuges, and have recourse to violence which his conscience could not approve. He was compelled to keep around him a great number of bravoës; and, as much for his own security as to ensure vigorous assistance, he had to choose the most daring, or, in other words, the most unprincipled, and thus to live with villains for the sake of justice. Yet on more than one occasion, either discouraged by ill success, or disquieted by imminent danger, wearied by a state of constant defence, disgusted with his companions, and in apprehension of dissipating his property, which was daily drawn upon largely, either in a good cause or in support of his bold enterprises,—more than once he had taken a fancy to turn friar; for in these times, this was the commonest way of escaping difficulties. This idea would probably have been only a fancy all his life, had it not been changed to a resolution by a more serious and terrible accident than he had yet met with.

He was walking one day along the streets, in company with a former shopkeeper, whom his father had raised to the office of steward, and was followed by two bravoës. The steward, whose name was Cristoforo, was about fifty years old, devoted from childhood to his master, whom he had known from his birth, and by whose wages and liberality he was himself supported, with his wife and eight children. Ludovico perceived a gentleman at a distance, an arrogant and overbearing man, whom he had never spoken to in his life, but his cordial enemy, to whom Ludovico heartily returned the hatred; for it is a singular advantage of this world, that men may hate and be hated without knowing each other.

The Signor, followed by four braves, advanced haughtily with a proud step, his head raised, and his mouth expressive of insolence and contempt. They both walked next to the wall, which (be it observed) was on Ludovico's right hand; and this, according to custom, gave him the right (how far people will go to pursue the *right* of a case!) of not moving from the said wall to give place to any one, to which custom, at that time, great importance was attached. The Signor, on the contrary, in virtue of another custom, held that this right ought to be conceded to him in consideration of his rank, and that it was Ludovico's part to give way. So that in this, as it happens in many other cases, two opposing customs clashed, the question of which was to have the preference remaining undecided, thus giving occasions of dispute, whenever one hard head chanced to come in contact with another of the same nature. The foes approached each other, both close to the wall, like two walking figures in bas-relief, and on finding themselves face to face, the Signor, eyeing Ludovico with a haughty air and imperious frown, said, in a corresponding tone of voice, "Go to the outside."

"You go yourself," replied Ludovico; "the path is mine."

"With men of your rank the path is always mine."

"Yes, if the arrogance of men of your rank were a law for men of mine."

The two trains of attendants stood still, each behind its leader, fiercely regarding each other, with their hands on their daggers prepared for battle, while the passers by stopped on their way and withdrew into the road, placing themselves at a distance to observe the issue; the presence of these spectators continually animating the punctilio of the disputants.

"To the outside, vile mechanic! or I'll quickly teach you the civility you owe a gentleman."

"You lie: I am not vile."

“You lie, if you say I lie.” This reply was pragmatical. “And if you were a gentleman, as I am,” added the Signor, “I would prove with the sword that you are the liar.”

“That is a capital pretext for dispensing with the trouble of maintaining the insolence of your words by your deeds.”

“Throw this rascal in the mud,” said the Signor, turning to his followers.

“We shall see,” said Ludovico, immediately retiring a step, and laying his hand on his sword.

“Rash man!” cried the other, drawing his own, “I will break this when it is stained with your vile blood.”

At these words they flew upon one another, the attendants of the two parties fighting in defence of their masters. The combat was unequal, both in number, and because Ludovico aimed rather at parrying the blows of, and disarming, his enemy than killing him, while the Signor was resolved upon his foe’s death at any cost. Ludovico had already received a blow from the dagger of one of the braves in his left arm, and a slight wound on his cheek, and his principal enemy was pressing on to make an end of him, when Cristoforo, seeing his master in extreme peril, went behind the Signor with his dagger, who, turning all his fury upon his new enemy, ran him through with his sword. At this sight, Ludovico, as if beside himself, buried his own in the body of his provoker, and laid him at his feet, almost at the same moment as the unfortunate Cristoforo. The followers of the Signor, seeing him on the ground, immediately betook themselves to flight: those of Ludovico, wounded and beaten, having no longer any one to fight with, and not wishing to be mingled in the rapidly increasing multitude, fled the other way, and Ludovico was left alone in the midst of the crowd, with these two ill-fated companions lying at his feet.

“What’s the matter?—There’s one.—There are two.—They have pierced his body.—Who has been murdered?—That tyrant.—Oh, Holy Mary, what a confusion!—Seek, and you shall find.—One moment pays all.—So he is gone!—What a blow!—It must be a serious affair.—And this other poor fellow!—Mercy! what a sight!—Save him, save him!—It will go hard with him too.—See how he is mangled! he is covered with blood.—Escape, poor fellow, escape!—Take care you are not caught.”

These words predominating over the confused tumult of the crowd, expressed their prevailing opinion, while assistance accompanied the advice. The scene had taken place near a Capuchin convent, an asylum in those days, as every one knows, impenetrable to bailiffs, and all that complication of persons and things which went by the name of justice. The wounded and almost senseless murderer was conducted, or rather carried by the crowd, and delivered to the monks with the recommendation, “He is a worthy man who has made a proud tyrant cold; he was provoked to it, and did it in his own defence.”

Ludovico had never before shed blood, and although homicide was in those times so common that every one was accustomed to hear of and witness it, yet the impression made on his mind by the sight of one man murdered *for* him, and another *by* him, was new and indescribable;—a disclosure of sentiments before unknown. The fall of his enemy, the sudden alteration of the features, passing in a moment from a threatening and furious expression to the calm and solemn stillness of death, was a sight that instantly changed the feelings of the murderer. He was dragged to the convent almost without knowing where he was, or what they were doing to him; and when his memory returned, he found himself on a bed in the infirmary, attended by a

surgeon-friar, (for the Capuehins generally had one in each convent,) who was applying lint and bandages to the two wounds he had received in the contest. A father, whose special office it was to attend upon the dying, and who had frequently been called upon to exercise his duties in the street, was quickly summoned to the place of combat. He returned a few minutes afterwards, and entering the infirmary, approached the bed where Ludovico lay. "Comfort yourself," said he, "he has at least died calmly, and has charged me to ask your pardon, and to convey his to you." These words aroused poor Ludovico, and awakened more vividly and distinctly the feelings which confusedly crowded upon his mind; sorrow for his friend, consternation and remorse for the blow that had escaped his hand, and at the same time a bitterly painful compassion for the man he had slain. "And the other?" anxiously demanded he of the friar.

"The other had expired when I arrived."

In the meanwhile, the gates and precincts of the convent swarmed with idle and inquisitive people; but on the arrival of a body of constables, they dispersed the crowd, and placed themselves in ambush at a short distance from the doors, so that none might go out unobserved. A brother of the deceased, however, accompanied by two of his cousins and an aged uncle, came, armed *cap-à-pié*, with a powerful retinue of braves, and began to make the circuit of the convent, watching with looks and gestures of threatening contempt the idle by-standers, who did not dare say, He is out of your reach, though they had it written on their faces.

As soon as Ludovico could collect his scattered thoughts, he asked for a Father Confessor, and begged that he would seek the widow of Cristoforo, ask forgiveness in his name for his having been the involuntary cause of her desolation, and at the same time assure

her that he would undertake to provide for her destitute family. In reflecting on his own condition, the wish to become a friar, which he had often before revolved in his mind, revived with double force and earnestness ; it seemed as if God himself, by bringing him to a convent just at this juncture, had put it in his way, and given him a sign of His will, and his resolution was taken. He therefore called the guardian, and told him of his intention. The superior replied, that he must beware of forming precipitate resolutions, but that if, on consideration, he persisted in his desire, he would not be refused. He then sent for a notary, and made an assignment of the whole of his property (which was no insignificant amount) to the family of Cristoforo, a certain sum to the widow, as if it were an entailed dowry, and the remainder to the children.

The resolution of Ludovico came very *apropos* for his hosts, who were in a sad dilemma on his account. To send him away from the convent, and thus expose him to justice, that is to say, to the vengeance of his enemies, was a course on which they would not for a moment bestow a thought. It would have been to give up their proper privileges, disgrace the convent in the eyes of the people, draw upon themselves the animadversion of all the Capuchins in the universe for suffering their common rights to be infringed upon, and arouse all the ecclesiastical authorities, who at that time considered themselves the lawful guardians of these rights. On the other hand, the kindred of the slain, powerful themselves, and strong in adherents, were prepared to take vengeance, and denounced as their enemy any one who should put an obstacle in their way. The history does not tell us that much grief was felt for the loss of the deceased, nor even that a single tear was shed over him by any of his relations: it merely says that they were all on fire to have the murderer, dead or living, in

their power. But Ludovico's assuming the habit of a Capuehin settled all these difficulties; he made atonement in a manner, imposed a penance on himself, tacitly confessed himself in fault, and withdrew from the contest; he was, in fact, an enemy laying down his arms. The relatives of the dead could also, if they pleased, believe and make it their boast that he had turned friar in despair, and through dread of their vengeance. But in any case, to oblige a man to relinquish his property, shave his head, and walk barefoot, to sleep on straw, and to live upon alms, was surely a punishment fully equivalent to the most heinous offence.

The Superior presented himself with an easy humility to the brother of the deceased, and after a thousand protestations of respect for his most illustrious house, and of desire to comply with his wishes as far as was possible, he spoke of Ludovico's penitence, and the determination he had made, politely making it appear that his family ought to be therewith satisfied, and insinuating, yet more courteously, and with still greater dexterity, that whether he were pleased or not, so it would be. The brother fell into a rage, which the Capuehin patiently allowed to evaporate, occasionally remarking that he had too just cause of sorrow. The Signor also gave him to understand, that in any case his family had it in their power to enforce satisfaction, to which the Capuehin, whatever he might think, did not say no; and finally he asked, or rather required as a condition, that the murderer of his brother should immediately quit the city. The Capuehin, who had already determined upon such a course, replied that it should be as he wished, leaving the nobleman to believe, if he chose, that his compliance was an act of obedience; and thus the matter concluded to the satisfaction of all parties. The family were released from their obligation; the friars had rescued a fellow-creature, and secured

their own privileges, without making themselves enemies; the *dilettanti* in chivalry gladly saw the affair terminated in so laudable a manner; the populace rejoiced at a worthy man's escaping from danger, and at the same time marvelled at his conversion; finally, and above all, in the midst of his sorrow, it was a consolation to poor Ludovico himself, to enter upon a life of expiation, and devote himself to services, which, though they could not remedy, might at least make some atonement for his unhappy deed, and alleviate the intolerable pangs of remorse. The idea that his resolution might be attributed to fear pained him for a moment, but he quickly consoled himself by the remembrance that even this unjust imputation would be a punishment for him, and a means of expiation. Thus, at the age of thirty, Ludovico took the monastic habit, and being required, according to custom, to change his name, he chose one that would continually remind him of the fault he had to atone for—the name of friar Cristoforo.

Scarcely was the ceremony of taking the religious habit completed, when the guardian told him that he must keep his novitiate at * * *, sixty miles distant, and that he must leave the next day. The novice bowed respectfully, and requested a favour of him. "Allow me, Father," said he, "before I quit the city where I have shed the blood of a fellow-creature, and leave a family justly offended with me, to make what satisfaction I can by at least confessing my sorrow, begging forgiveness of the brother of the deceased, and so removing, please God, the enmity he feels towards me." The guardian, thinking that such an act, besides being good in itself, would also serve still more to reconcile the family to the convent, instantly repaired to the offended Signor's house, and communicated to him Friar Cristoforo's request. The Signor, greatly surprised at

so unexpected a proposal, felt a rising of anger, mingled perhaps with complacency, and after thinking a moment, "Let him come to-morrow," said he, mentioning the hour, and the Superior returned to the monastery to acquaint the novice with the desired permission.

The gentleman soon remembered that the more solemn and notorious the submission was, the more his influence and importance would be increased among his friends and the public; and it would also, (to use a fashionable modern expression,) make a fine page in the history of the family. He therefore hastily sent to inform all his relatives, that the next day at noon they must hold themselves engaged to come to him, for the purpose of receiving a common satisfaction. At mid-day the palace swarmed with the nobility of both sexes and of every age; occasioning a confused intermingling of large cloaks, lofty plumes, and pendent jewels; a vibrating movement of stiffened and curled ribbons, an impeded trailing of embroidered trains. The ante-rooms, court-yards, and roads overflowed with servants, pages, bravoës, and inquisitive gazers. On seeing all this preparation, Friar Cristoforo guessed the motive, and felt a momentary perturbation; but he soon recovered himself, and said:—"Be it so; I committed the murder publicly, in the presence of many of his enemies; that was an injury; this is reparation."—So, with the Father, his companion, at his side, and his eyes bent on the ground, he passed the threshold, traversed the courtyard among a crowd who eyed him with very uncere- monious curiosity, ascended the stairs, and in the midst of another crowd of nobles, who gave way at his approach, was ushered, with a thousand eyes upon him, into the presence of the master of the mansion, who, surrounded by his nearest relatives, stood in the centre of the room with a downcast look, grasping in his left

hand the hilt of his sword, while with the right he folded the collar of his cloak over his breast.

There is sometimes in the face and behaviour of a person so direct an expression, such an effusion, so to speak, of the internal soul, that in a crowd of spectators there will be but one judgment and opinion of him. So was it with Friar Cristoforo; his face and behaviour plainly expressed to the by-standers that he had not become a friar, nor submitted to that humiliation from the fear of man; and the discovery immediately conciliated all hearts. On perceiving the offended Signor, he quickened his steps, fell on his knees at his feet, crossed his hands on his breast, and bending his shaved head, said, "I am the murderer of your brother. God knows how gladly I would restore him to you at the price of my own blood, but it cannot be: I can only make inefficacious and tardy excuses, and implore you to accept them for God's sake." All eyes were immoveably fixed upon the novice and the illustrious personage he was addressing; all ears were attentively listening; and when Friar Cristoforo ceased, there was a murmur of compassion and respect throughout the room. The gentleman, who stood in an attitude of forced condescension and restrained anger, was much moved at these words, and bending towards the suppliant, "Rise," said he, in an altered tone. "The offence—the act certainly—but the habit you bear—not only so, but also yourself—Rise, Father—My brother—I cannot deny it—was a cavalier—was rather a—precipitate man—rather hasty. But all happens by God's appointment. Speak of it no more But, Father, you must not remain in this posture." And taking him by the arm, he compelled him to rise. The friar, standing with his head bowed, and his eyes fixed on the ground, replied, "I may hope then that I have your forgiveness? And if I obtain it from *you*, from whom may I not hope.

it? Oh! if I might hear from your lips that one word—pardon!”

“Pardon!” said the gentleman. “You no longer need it. But since you desire it, certainly . . . certainly, I pardon you with my whole heart, and all”

“All! all!” exclaimed the bystanders, with one voice. The countenance of the friar expanded with grateful joy, under which, however, might be traced an humble and deep compunction for the evil which the forgiveness of men could not repair. The gentleman, overcome by this deportment, and urged forward by the general feeling, threw his arms round Cristoforo’s neck, and gave and received the kiss of peace.

“Bravo! well done!” burst forth from all parts of the room: there was a general movement, and all gathered round the friar. Servants immediately entered, bringing abundance of refreshment. The Signor, again addressing Cristoforo, who was preparing to retire, said, “Father, let me give you some of these trifles; afford me this proof of your friendship;” and was on the point of helping him before any of the others; but he, drawing back with a kind of friendly resistance, “These things,” said he, “are no longer for me; but God forbid that I should refuse your gifts. I am about to start on my journey; allow me to take a loaf of bread, that I may be able to say I have shared your charity, eaten of your bread, and received a token of your forgiveness.” The nobleman, much affected, ordered it to be brought, and shortly a waiter entered in full dress, bearing the loaf on a silver dish, and presented it to the father, who took it with many thanks, and put it in his basket. Then, obtaining permission to depart, he bade farewell to the master of the house and those who stood nearest to him, and with difficulty made his escape as they endeavoured for a moment to impede his progress; while, in the ante-rooms, he had to struggle to free himself from the

servants, and even from the bravoës, who kissed the hem of his garment, his rope and his hood. At last he reached the street, borne along as in triumph, and accompanied by a crowd of people as far as the gate of the city, from whence he commenced his pedestrian journey towards the place of his novitiate.

The brother and other relatives of the deceased, who had been prepared in the morning to enjoy the sad triumph of pride, were left instead full of the serene joy of a forgiving and benevolent disposition. The company entertained themselves some time longer, with feelings of unusual kindness and cordiality, in discussions of a very different character to what they had anticipated on assembling. Instead of satisfaction enforced, insults avenged, and obligations discharged, praises of the novice, reconciliation, and meekness, were the topics of conversation. And he who, for the fiftieth time, would have recounted how Count Muzio, his father, had served the Marquis Stanislao, (a violent, boastful man, as every one is aware,) in a well-known encounter of the same kind, related, instead, the penitence and wonderful patience of one friar Simone, who had died many years before. When the party had dispersed, the Signor, still considerably agitated, reconsidered with surprise what he had heard and had himself expressed, and muttered between his teeth, "The devil of a friar!" (we must record his exact words) "The devil of a friar!—if he had knelt there a few moments longer, I should almost have begged *his* pardon for his having murdered my brother."—Our story expressly notes that from that day forward he became a little less impetuous, and rather more tractable.

Father Cristoforo pursued his way with a peace of mind such as he had never experienced since that terrible event, to make atonement for which his whole life was henceforth to be consecrated. He maintained the silence usually imposed upon novices without difficulty, being

entirely absorbed in the thought of the labours, privations, and humiliations he would have to undergo for the expiation of his fault. At the usual hour of refreshment, he stopped at the house of a patron, and partook almost voraciously of the bread of forgiveness, reserving, however, a small piece, which he kept in his basket as a perpetual remembrancer.

It is not our intention to write the history of his cloistral life: it will suffice to say, that while he willingly and carefully fulfilled the duties customarily assigned to him, to preach and to attend upon the dying, he never suffered an opportunity to pass of executing two other offices which he had imposed upon himself—the composing of differences, and the protection of the oppressed. Without being aware of it, he entered upon these undertakings with some portion of his former zeal, and a slight remnant of that courageous spirit which humiliation and mortifications had not been able entirely to subdue. His manner of speaking was habitually meek and humble; but when truth and justice were at stake, he was immediately animated with his former warmth, which, mingled with and modified by a solemn emphasis acquired in preaching, imparted to his language a very marked character. His whole countenance and deportment indicated a long-continued struggle between a naturally hasty, passionate temper, and an opposing and habitually victorious will, ever on the watch, and directed by the highest principles and motives. One of the brotherhood, his friend, who knew him well, likened him, on one occasion, to those too-expressive words—too expressive, that is, in their natural state, which some persons, well-behaved enough on ordinary occasions, pronounce, when overcome by anger, in a half-and-half sort of way, with a slight change of letters—words which even thus transformed bear about them much of their primitive energy.

If one unknown to him, in Lucia's sad condition, had implored the aid of Father Cristoforo, he would immediately have attended to the request; when it concerned Lucia, however, he hastened to her with double solicitude, since he knew and admired her innocence. He had already trembled for her danger, and felt a lively indignation at the base persecution of which she was the object. Besides this, he feared that by advising her to say nothing about it, and keep quiet, he might have been the cause of some sad consequences; so that in this case there was added to the kind solicitude, which was, as it were, natural to him, that scrupulous perplexity which often torments the innocent.

But while we have been relating the early history of Father Cristoforo, he has arrived at the village, and reached the door; and the women, leaving the harsh-toned spinning-wheel at which they were engaged, have risen and exclaimed with one voice, "Oh, Father Cristoforo! God reward you!"



CHAPTER V.

AFTER CRISTOFORO stopped on the threshold, and quickly perceived, by a glance at the women, that his presentiments had not been unfounded. While raising his beard, by a slight movement of the head backwards, he said, in that interrogative tone which anticipates a mournful reply, "Well?" Lucia answered by a flood of tears. Her mother began to apologize for having dared but he advanced and seated himself on a three-legged stool, and cut short all her excuses, by saying to Lucia, "Calm yourself, my poor daughter. And you," continued he, turning to Agnese, "tell me what has happened." The good woman related the melancholy story as well as she could, while the friar changed colour a thousand times, at one moment

raising his eyes to heaven, the next, kicking his heels on the ground. At the conclusion of the recital, he covered his face with his hands, and exclaimed, "Oh, blessed Lord! how long!" But, without finishing the sentence, he turned again to the women. "Poor things!" said he, "God has indeed visited you. Poor Lucia!"

"You will not forsake us, Father?" sobbed Lucia.

"Forsake you!" replied he. "Great God! with what face could I again make request to Him, if I should forsake you? You in this state! You whom He confides to me! Don't despair: He will help you. He sees all: He can make use even of such an unworthy instrument as I am to confound a Let us see: let me think what I can do for you."

So saying, he leaned his left elbow on his knee, laid his forehead on his hand, and with the right grasped his beard and chin, as if to concentrate and hold fast all the powers of his mind. But the most attentive consideration only served to show more distinctly the urgency and intricacy of the case, and how few, how uncertain, and how dangerous were the ways of meeting it. "Instil shame into Don Abbondio, and make him sensible of how much he is failing in his duty? Shame and duty are nothing to him, when overwhelmed with fear. Inspire him with fears? How can I suggest one that would overbalance the dread he already has of a musket? Inform the Cardinal-Archbishop of all, and invoke his authority? This requires time, and in the meanwhile what might not happen? And afterwards, supposing even this unhappy innocent were married, would that be a curb to such a man? Who knows to what length he might proceed? And resist him? How? Ah! if I could," thought the poor friar: "if I could but engage in this cause my brethren here and at Milan! But it is not a common affair, and I should be abandoned. Don Rodrigo pretends to be a friend to the convent,

and professes himself a favourer of the Capuchins; and his followers have more than once taken refuge with us. I should find myself alone in the undertaking; I should be opposed by meddling, quarrelsome persons; and, what is worse, I should, perhaps, by an ill-timed endeavour, only render the condition of this poor girl more hopeless." Having considered every view of the question, the best course seemed to be to confront Don Rodrigo himself, and try, by entreaties, the terrors of the life to come, and even of this world, if that were possible, to dissuade him from his infamous purpose. At least, he could by this means ascertain whether he continued obstinately bent on his wicked design, discover something more of his intentions, and act accordingly.

While the friar was thus engaged, Renzo, who for reasons that every one can divine, could not long absent himself, made his appearance at the door; but seeing the Father absorbed in thought, and the women beckoning to him not to interrupt him, he stood silent on the threshold. Raising his head to communicate his design to the women, the friar perceived Renzo, and saluted him with his usual affection, increased and rendered more intense by compassion.

"Have they told you . . . Father?" asked Renzo, in an agitated tone.

"Only too much: and for that reason I am here."

"What do you say to the rascal?"

"What do you wish me to say of him? He is far away, and my words would be of no use. But I say to you, my Renzo, trust in God, and He will not forsake you."

"What blessed words!" exclaimed the youth. "You are not one of those who always wrong the poor. But the Signor Curate, and that Signor Doctor . . ."

"Don't recal those scenes, Renzo, which only serve

to irritate you uselessly. I am a poor friar; but I repeat what I have said to these poor women: poor as I am, I will not forsake you."

"Ah! you are not like the world's friends! Good-for-nothing creatures that they are! You would not believe the protestations they made me in prosperity. Ha! ha! They were ready to give their lives for me; they would have defended me against the devil. If I had had an enemy . . . I had only to let them know it, and I should have been quickly rid of him! And now, if you were to see how they draw back . . ." At this moment Renzo perceived, on raising his eyes to those of his auditor, that the good friar's face was clouded, and he felt that he had uttered something wrong. He only added to his perplexities, however, and made matters worse, by trying to remedy them: "I meant to say . . . I don't at all mean . . . that is, I meant to say . . ."

"What did you mean to say? Have you, then, begun to spoil my work before I have undertaken it? It is well for you that you have been undeceived in time. What! you went in search of friends . . . and such friends! . . . who could not have helped you, had they been willing; and you forgot to seek the only One who can and will assist you! Do you not know that God is the friend of the afflicted who put their trust in Him? Do you not know that threatening and contention gain nothing for the weak? And even if . . ." Here he forcibly grasped Renzo's arm: his countenance, without losing any of its authority, expressed a solemn contrition; he cast his eyes on the ground, and his voice became slow and almost sepulchral: "Even if they did, it is a terrible gain! Renzo! will you trust to me? To me, did I say—a feeble mortal, a poor friar? No; but will you trust in God?"

"Oh yes!" replied Renzo; "He is in truth the Lord."

“ Very well ; promise me that you will not attack—that you will not provoke—any one ; that you will be guided by me.”

“ I promise you.”

Lucia drew a long breath, as if she were relieved from a great weight ; and Agnese exclaimed, “ Bravo, my son ! ”

“ Listen, my children,” continued Friar Cristoforo ; “ I will go to-day and speak to this man. If it please God to touch his heart, and give force to my words, well ; but, if not, He will show us some other remedy. You, in the meanwhile, be quiet and retired ; avoid gossip, and don’t show yourselves. To-night, or to-morrow morning, at the latest, you shall see me again.” So saying, he cut short all their thanks and benedictions, and departed. He returned first to the convent, where he arrived in time to join the chorus in chanting, dined, and then set off on his way towards the den of the wild beast he had undertaken to tame.

The small but elegant palace of Don Rodrigo, stood by itself, rising like a castle from the summit of one of the abrupt cliffs by which the shore of the lake was broken and diversified. Our anonymous author only adds to this indication, that the site (it would have been better to have given the name in full,) was rather on the side adjoining the country of the Betrothed, about three miles distant from them, and four from the convent. At the base of the cliff, on the side looking towards the lake, lay a group of cottages, inhabited by the peasantry in the service of Don Rodrigo, the diminutive capital of his little kingdom. It was quite sufficient to pass through it to be assured of the character and customs of the country. Casting a glance into the lower rooms, should a door happen to be open, one saw hanging on the wall, fowling-pieces, spades, rakes, straw hats, nets, and powder-flasks, in admired confusion.

Everywhere might be seen powerful, fierce-looking men, wearing a large lock, turned back upon their head, and enclosed in a net; old men, who, having lost their teeth, appeared ready, at the slightest provocation, to show their gums; women, of masculine appearance, with strong, sinewy arms, prepared to come in to the aid of their tongues on every occasion. Even the very children, playing in the road, displayed in their countenances and behaviour a certain air of provocation and defiance.

Father Cristoforo passed through this hamlet, and ascended a winding footpath to a small level plot of ground, in front of the palace. The door was shut—a sign that the master of the mansion was dining, and would not be disturbed. The few small windows that looked into the road, the frame-works of which were disjointed, and decayed with age, were defended by large iron bars; and those of the ground-floor were so high, that a man could scarcely reach them by standing on the shoulders of another. Perfect silence reigned around; and a passer-by might have deemed it a deserted mansion, had not four creatures, two animate, and two inanimate, disposed opposite each other, outside, given some indication of inhabitants. Two great vultures, with extended wings, and pendent heads—one stripped of its feathers, and half consumed by time; the other still feathered, and in a state of preservation, were nailed, one on each post of the massive door-way; and two bravoës, stretched at full length on the benches to the right and left, were on guard, and expecting their call to partake of the remains of the Signor's table. The Father stood still, in the attitude of one who was prepared to wait; but one of the bravoës rose, and called to him: "Father, Father, come forward, we don't make Capuchins wait here; we are friends of the convent; and I have sometimes been within it when the air outside was not very good for me, and when, if the door had

been closed upon me, I should have fared badly." So saying, he gave two strokes of the knocker, which were answered immediately from within, by the howling and yelling of mastiffs and curs, and in a few moments by an old grumbling servant; but seeing the Father, he made him a low bow, quieted the animals with hand and voice, introduced the visitor into a narrow passage, and closed the door again. He then conducted him into a small apartment, and, regarding him with a surprised and respectful look, said, "Are you not Father Cristoforo of Pescarenico?"

"I am."

"You here?"

"As you see, my good man."

"It must be to do good, then. Good," continued he, muttering between his teeth, as he still led the way; "good may be done anywhere."

Having passed through two or three dark apartments, they at last reached the door of the dining-room, where they were greeted with a loud and confused noise of knives, forks, glasses, pewter dishes, and, above all, of discordant voices alternately endeavouring to take the lead in conversation. The friar wished to withdraw, and was debating at the door with the servant, and begging permission to wait in some corner of the house till dinner was over, when the door opened. A certain Count Attilio, who was sitting opposite, (he was a cousin of Don Rodrigo, and we have already mentioned him without giving his name,) seeing a shaved head and monk's habit, and perceiving the modest intentions of the good friar, exclaimed, "Aha! aha! You shan't make your escape, reverend Father; forward, forward!" Don Rodrigo, without precisely divining the object of this visit, had a sort of presentiment of what awaited him, and would have been glad to avoid it; but since Attilio had thoughtlessly given this blunt invitation, he was obliged

to second it, and said, "Come in, Father, come in." The friar advanced, making a low bow to the host, and respectfully responding to the salutations of the guests.

It is usual (I do not say invariable,) to represent the innocent in the presence of the wicked with an open countenance, an air of security, an undaunted heart, and a ready facility of expression. In reality, however, many circumstances are required to produce this behaviour, which are rarely met with in combination. It will not, therefore, be wondered at, that Friar Cristoforo, with the testimony of a good conscience, and a firm persuasion of the justice of the cause he had come to advocate, together with a mingled feeling of horror and compassion for Don Rodrigo, stood, nevertheless, with a certain air of timidity and submissiveness, in the presence of this same Don Rodrigo, who was seated before him in an arm-chair, in his own house, on his own estate, surrounded by his friends, and many indications of his power, with every homage paid to him, and with an expression of countenance that would at once prohibit the making a request, much more the giving advice, correction, or reproof. On his right, sat Count Attilio, his cousin, and, it is needless to say, his companion in libertinism and oppression, who had come from Milan to spend a few days with him. To his left, and on the other side of the table, was seated, with a profound respect, tempered, however, with a certain air of security, and even arrogance, the Signor Podestà;* the person whose business it was, professedly, to administer justice to Renzo Tramaglino, and inflict upon Don Rodrigo one of the appointed penalties. Opposite the Podestà, in an attitude of the purest, most unbounded servility, sat our Doctor, *Azzecca-garbugli*, with his black

* The governor, or magistrate of the place—a dignitary corresponding to the mayor of an English town; but less dignified in this instance, because exercising power in a smaller territory.

cap, and more than usually red nose; and facing the cousins were two obscure guests, of whom our story merely records that they did nothing but eat, bow their heads, and smile approval at everything uttered by a fellow guest, provided another did not contradict it.

"Give the Father a seat," said Don Rodrigo. A servant presented a chair, and Father Cristoforo sat down, making some excuse to the Signor for coming at so inopportune an hour.

"I wish to speak with you alone, on a matter of importance," added the friar, in a lower voice, in Don Rodrigo's ear.

"Very well, I will attend you," replied he; "but in the meanwhile, bring the Father something to drink."

The Father tried to excuse himself; but Don Rodrigo, raising his voice above the re-commencing tumult, cried, "No, no, you shall not do me this wrong; it shall never be said that a Capuchin left this house without tasting my wine, nor an insolent creditor the wood of my forests." These words were followed by a general laugh, and, for a moment, interrupted the question that was being warmly agitated among the guests. A servant then brought in a bottle of wine, on a tray, and a tall glass, in the shape of a chalice, and presented them to the Father, who, unwilling to refuse the pressing invitation of one he so much wished to propitiate, did not hesitate to pour some out, and began slowly to sip the wine.

"The authority of Tasso will not serve your purpose, respected Signor Podestà; it even militates against you," resumed Count Attilio, in a thundering voice; "for that learned, that great man, who perfectly understood all the rules of chivalry, has made the messenger of Argante ask leave of the pious Buglione, before delivering the challenge to the Christian knights . . ."

"But this," replied the Podestà, vociferating no less

vehemently, "this is a liberty, a mere liberty, a poetical ornament; since an ambassador is, in his nature, inviolable by the law of nations, *jure gentium*. But, without seeking so far, the proverb says, *Ambasciator non porta pena*; and proverbs, you know, contain the wisdom of the human race. Besides, the messenger having uttered nothing in his own name, but only presented the challenge in writing"

"But when will you understand that this messenger was an inconsiderate ass, who didn't know the first? . . ."

"With your leave, gentlemen," interrupted Don Rodrigo, who was afraid of the question being carried too far, "we will refer it to Father Cristoforo, and abide by his sentence."

"Well—very well," said Count Attilio, highly pleased at the idea of referring a question of chivalry to a Capuchin: while the more eager Podestà with difficulty restrained his excited feelings, and a shrug of contempt, which seemed to say—Absurdity!

"But, from what I have heard," said the Father, "these are matters I know nothing of."

"As usual, the modest excuses of the Fathers," said Don Rodrigo; "but you shall not get off so easily. Come, now, we know well enough you did not come into the world with a cowl on your head, and that you are no stranger to its ways. See here; this is the question"

"The case is this," began Count Attilio.

"Let me tell it, who am neutral, cousin," replied Don Rodrigo. "This is the story. A Spanish cavalier sent a challenge to a Milanese cavalier; the bearer, not finding him at home, delivered the summons to his brother, who, after reading it, gave the bearer in reply a good thrashing. The dispute is"

"One good turn deserves another," cried Count Attilio. "It was really inspiration"

“Of the devil,” added the Podestà. “To beat an ambassador!—a man whose person is sacred! Even you, Father, will say whether this was a knightly deed.”

“Yes, Signor, knightly,” cried the Count, “and you will allow *me* to say so, who ought to understand what relates to a cavalier. Oh, if they had been blows, it would be another matter; but a cudgel defiles nobody’s hands. What puzzles me is, why you think so much of the shoulders of a mean scoundrel.”

“Who said anything about his shoulders, Signor Count? You would make out I had talked nonsense such as never entered my mind. I spoke of his office, not of his shoulders; and am now considering the laws of *chivalry*. Be so good as to tell me whether the heralds that the ancient Romans sent to bid defiance to other nations asked leave to announce their message; and find me one writer who mentions that a herald was ever beaten.”

“What have the officers of the ancient Romans to do with us—a simple nation, and in these things far, far behind us? But, according to the laws of modern *chivalry*, which are the only right ones, I affirm and maintain that a messenger who dared to place a challenge in the hand of a knight without having asked his permission, is an incautious fool, who may be beaten, and who richly deserves it.”

“Answer me this syllogism”

“No, no, nothing.”

“But listen, listen. To strike an unarmed person is a treacherous act. *Atqui* the messenger *de quo* was without arms. *Ergo*”

“Gently, gently, Signor Podestà.”

“Why gently?”

“Gently, I say: what are you talking about? It is an act of treachery to give a man a blow with a sword

behind him, or to shoot him in the back; and to this even there are certain exceptions . . . but we will keep to the point. I allow that this may generally be called an act of treachery; but to bestow four blows on a paltry fellow like him! It would have been a likely thing to say: Take care I don't beat you, as one says to a gentleman: Draw your sword. And you, respected Signor Doctor, instead of smiling at me there, and giving me to understand you are of my opinion, why don't you support my position with your capital powers of argument, and help me to drive some reason into the head of this Signor?"

"I . . ." replied the Doctor, in confusion. "I enjoy this learned dispute, and am glad of the accident that has given occasion to so agreeable a war of genius. But it does not belong to me to give sentence: his illustrious lordship has already delegated a judge . . . the Father here . . ."

"True," said Don Rodrigo; "but how is the judge to speak when the disputants will not be silent?"

"I am dumb," said Count Attilio. The Podestà made a sign that he would not speak.

"Ah, at last! What do you say, Father?" asked Don Rodrigo with half-jesting gravity.

"I have already excused myself by saying I don't understand the matter," replied Friar Cristoforo, returning the wine-glass to a servant.

"Poor excuses," cried the two cousins. "We must have your sentence."

"Since you wish it, my humble opinion is that there should be neither challenges, bearers, nor blows."

The guests interchanged looks of unfeigned astonishment.

"Oh this is too bad!" exclaimed Count Attilio. "Pardon me, Father, but this *is* too bad. It is easy to see you know nothing of the world."

"He?" said Don Rodrigo. "Ha! ha! he knows it, cousin, as well as you do: isn't it true, Father?"

Instead of replying to this courteous interrogation, the Father said to himself:—This is aimed at you; but remember, friar, that you are not here for yourself; and that which affects you only is not to be taken into the account.

"It may be," said the cousin: "but the Father . . . what is his name?"

"Father Cristoforo," replied more than one.

"But, Father Cristoforo, most revered Father, with your principles you would turn the world upside down. Without challenges! Without blows! Farewell to the point of honour! impunity for all villains. Fortunately, however, the supposition is impossible."

"Up, Doctor, up," broke in Don Rodrigo, who always tried to divert the argument from the original disputants. "You are the man to argue on any matter. Let us see what you will do in discussing this question with Father Cristoforo."

"Really," replied the Doctor, brandishing his fork in the air, and turning to the Father, "really I cannot understand how Father Cristoforo, who is at once the perfect devotee, and a man of the world, should not remember that his sentence, good, excellent, and of just weight, as it is in the pulpit, is of no value (with due respect be it spoken,) in a question of chivalry. But the Father knows, better than I, that everything is good in its place; and I think that this time he has only endeavoured to escape by a jest from the difficulty of giving sentence."

What can one reply to reasonings deduced from wisdom so ancient, yet so new? Nothing; and so thought our friar.

But Don Rodrigo, wishing to cut short this dispute, proceeded to suggest another. "Apropos," said he;

“ I hear there are rumours of an accommodation at Milan.”

The reader must know that, at this time, there was a contest for the succession to the Duchy of Mantua, which, on the death of Vincenzo Gonzaga, who left no male issue, had fallen into the possession of the Duke of Nevers, Gonzaga's nearest relation. Louis XIII., or rather Cardinal Richelieu, wished to support him on account of his being well-disposed towards the French. Philip IV., or rather the Count D'Olivares, commonly called the Count Duke, opposed him for the same reason, and had declared war against him. As the Duchy was a fief of the empire, the two parties made interest, by intrigue, threats, and solicitations, at the Court of the Emperor Ferdinand II.; the former urging him to grant the investiture to the new Duke, the latter to refuse it, and even assist in banishing him from the State.

“ I am inclined to think,” said Count Attilio, “ that matters may be adjusted. I have certain reasons”

“ Don't believe it, Signor Count, don't believe it,” interrupted the Podestà; “ even in this corner of the world I have means of ascertaining the state of things; for the Spanish governor of the castle, who condescends to make me his friend, and who being the son of one of the Count Duke's dependents, is informed of everything”

“ I tell you, I have opportunity every day at Milan of talking with great men; and I know, on good authority, that the Pope is highly interested in the restoration of peace, and has made propositions”

“ So it ought to be, the thing is according to rule, and his Holiness does his duty; a Pope ought always to mediate between christian princes; but the Count Duke has his own policy, and”

“ And, and, and — do you know, my good Signor,

what the Emperor thinks of it at this moment? Do you think there is no other place in the world besides Mantua? There are many things to be looked after, my good Signor. Do you know, for example, how far the Emperor can, at this moment, confide in that Prince Valdistano, or Vallestai, or whatever they call him; and whether”

“His right name in German,” again interrupted the Podestà, “is Vagliensteino, as I have often heard it pronounced by our Spanish Signor, the governor of the castle. But be of good courage, for”

“Will you teach me?” exclaimed the Count, angrily; but Don Rodrigo motioned to him with his knee, for his sake, to cease contradiction. He therefore remained silent; and the Podestà, like a vessel disengaged from a sand-bank, continued, with wide-spread sails, the course of his eloquence. “Vagliensteino gives me little concern, because the Count Duke has his eyes on everything, and in every place; and if Vagliensteino chooses to play any tricks, he will set him right with fair words or foul. He has his eye everywhere, I say, and long arms; and if he has resolved, as he justly has, like a good politician, that the Signor Duke of Nevers shall not take root in Mantua, the Signor Duke of Nevers will not take root there, and the Cardinal Richelieu will sink in the water. It makes me smile to see this worthy Signor Cardinal contending with a Count Duke—with an Olivares. I should like to rise again, after a lapse of two hundred years, to hear what posterity will say of these fine pretensions. It requires something more than envy: there must be a head; and of heads, like that of a Count Duke, there is but one in the world. The Count Duke, my good Signors,” continued the Podestà, sailing before the wind, and a little surprised at not encountering one shoal, “the Count Duke is an aged fox, (speaking with all respect,) who can make anybody lose

his track; when he aims at the right, we may be sure he will take the left; so that no one can boast of knowing his intentions; and even they who execute them, and they who write his despatches, understand nothing of them. I can speak with some knowledge of the circumstances; for that worthy man, the Governor of the Castle, deigns to place some confidence in me. The Count Duke, on the other hand, knows exactly what is going forward in all the other Courts, and their great politicians—many of whom, it cannot be denied, are very upright men—have scarcely imagined a design before the Count Duke has discovered it, with that clever head of his, his underhand ways, and his nets everywhere spread. That poor man, the Cardinal Richelieu, makes an attempt *here*, busies himself *there*; he toils, he strives; and what for? When he has succeeded in digging a mine, he finds a countermine already completed by the Count Duke”

No one knows when the Podestà would have come ashore, had not Don Rodrigo, urged by the suggestions of his cousin, ordered a servant to bring him a certain bottle of wine.

“Signor Podestà,” said he, “and gentlemen; a toast to the Count Duke; and you will then tell me whether the wine is worthy of the person.” The Podestà replied by a bow, in which might be discerned an expression of particular acknowledgment; for all that was said or done in honour of the Duke, he received, in part, as done to himself.

“Long live Don Gasparo Guzman, Count of Olivares, Duke of San Lucar, grand Private of the King, Don Philip the Great, our Sovereign!” exclaimed Don Rodrigo, raising his glass.

Private, (for the information of those who know it not,) was the title used in those days to signify the favourite of a prince.

“ Long live the Count !” replied all.

“ Help the Father,” said Don Rodrigo.

“ Excuse me,” replied the Father; “ but I have already been guilty of a breach of discipline, and I cannot”

“ What !” said Don Rodrigo; “ it is a toast to the Count Duke. Will you make us believe that you hold with the Navarrines ?”

Thus they contemptuously styled the French Princes of Navarre, who had begun to reign over them in the time of Henry IV.

On such an adjuration, he was obliged to taste the wine. All the guests broke out in exclamations and encomiums upon it, except the Doctor, who, by the gesture of his head, the glance of his eyes, and the compression of his lips, expressed much more than he could have done by words.

“ What do *you* say of it, eh, Doctor ?” asked Don Rodrigo.

Withdrawing from the wine-glass a nose more ruddy and bright than itself, the Doctor replied, with marked emphasis upon every syllable : “ I say, pronounce and affirm that this is the Olivares of wines ; *censui, et in eam ivi sententiam*, that its equal cannot be found in the twenty-two kingdoms of the King, our Sovereign, whom God defend ! I declare and determine that the dinners of the most noble Signor Don Rodrigo excel the suppers of Heliogabalus, and that famine is perpetually banished and excluded from this place, where splendour reigns and has its abode.”

“ Well said ! well defined !” cried the guests, with one voice ; but the word *famine*, which he had uttered by chance, at once directed the minds of all to this mournful subject, and every one spoke of the famine. In this matter they were all agreed, at least on the main point ; but the uproar was greater, perhaps, than

if there had been a diversity of opinion. All spoke at once. "There is no famine," said one; "it is the monopolists"

"And the bakers," said another, "who hide the grain. Hang them, say I."

"Yes, yes, hang them without mercy."

"Upon fair trial," cried the Podestà.

"Trial?" cried Count Attilio, more loudly. "Summary justice, I say. Take three or four, or five or six, of those who are acknowledged by the common voice to be the richest and most avaricious, and hang them."

"Examples! examples!—without examples, nothing can be done."

"Hang them! hang them! and grain will flow out in abundance."

Whoever, in passing through a fair, has had the pleasure of hearing the harmony produced by a party of fiddlers, when, between one air and another, each one tunes his instrument, making it sound as loud as possible, that he may the more distinctly hear it in the midst of, and above, the surrounding uproar, may imagine what would be the harmony of these (if one may so say) discourses. The party continued pouring out and drinking the wine, while the praises of it were mingled, as was but just, with sentences of economical jurisprudence; so that the loudest, and most frequently-heard, words were—*nectar*, and *hang them*.

Don Rodrigo, in the meanwhile, glanced from time to time towards the friar, and always saw him in the same station, giving no signs of impatience or hurry, without a movement tending to remind him that he was waiting his leisure, but with the air of one who was determined not to depart till he had had a hearing. He would gladly have sent him away, and escaped the interview; but to dismiss a Capuchin without having given him audience, was not according to the rules of his policy.

However, since the annoying duty could not be avoided, he resolved to discharge it at once, and free himself from the obligation. He therefore rose from the table, and with him all the excited party, without ceasing their clamour. Having asked leave of his guests, he advanced in a haughty manner towards the friar, who had immediately risen with the rest; and saying to him, "At your command, Father," conducted him into another apartment.



CHAPTER VI.

NOW can I obey you?" said Don Rodrigo standing in the middle of the room. His words were these ; but the tone in which they were pronounced, clearly meant to say, remember before whom you are standing, take heed to your words, and be expeditious.

There was no surer or quicker way of inspiring Friar Cristoforo with courage, than to address him with haughtiness. He had stood waveringly, and at a loss for words, passing through his fingers the beads of the rosary that hung at his girdle, as if he hoped to find in some of them an introduction to his speech ; but at this behaviour of Don Rodrigo's, there instantly rose to his mind more to say than he had want of. Immediately, however, recollecting how important it was not to spoil

his work, or, what was far worse, the work he had undertaken for others, he corrected and tempered the language that had presented itself to his mind, and said, with cautious humility; "I come to propose to you an act of justice, to supplicate a deed of mercy. Some men of bad character have made use of the name of your illustrious lordship, to alarm a poor curate, and dissuade him from performing his duty, and to oppress two innocent persons. You can confound them by a word, restore all to order, and relieve those who are so shamefully wronged. You are able to do it; and being able . . . conscience, honour . . ."

"You will be good enough to talk of my conscience when I ask your advice about it. As to my honour, I beg to inform you, I am the guardian of it, and I only; and that whoever dares intrude himself to share the guardianship with me, I regard as a rash man, who offends against it."

Friar Cristoforo, perceiving from these words that the Signor sought to put a wrong construction on all he said, and to turn the discourse into a dispute, so as to prevent his coming to the main point, bound himself still more rigidly to be patient, and to swallow every insult he might please to offer. He therefore replied, in a subdued tone, "If I have said anything to offend you, I certainly did not intend it. Correct me, reprove me, if I do not speak becomingly, but deign to listen to me. For Heaven's sake—for the sake of that God in whose presence we must all appear . . ." and in saying this, he took between his hands the little cross of wood appended to his rosary, and held it up before the eyes of his frowning auditor; "be not obstinately resolved to refuse an act of justice so easy and so due to the poor. Remember that God's eye is ever over them, and that their imprecations are heard above. Innocence is powerful in His . . ."

"Aha! father!" sharply interrupted Don Rodrigo: "the respect I bear to your habit is great; but if anything could make me forget it, it would be to see it on one who dares to come as a spy into my house."

These words brought a crimson glow upon the cheeks of the friar; but with the countenance of one who swallows a very bitter medicine, he replied, "You do not think I deserve such a title. You feel in your heart that the act I am now performing is neither wicked nor contemptible. Listen to me, Signor Don Rodrigo; and Heaven grant a day may not come in which you will have to repent of not having listened to me! I will not lessen your honour.—What honour, Signor Don Rodrigo! what honour in the sight of men! what honour in the sight of God! You have much in your power, but"

"Don't you know," said Don Rodrigo, interrupting him in an agitated tone, the mingled effect of anger and remorse, "don't you know that when the fancy takes me to hear a sermon, I can go to church like other people? But in my own house! Oh!" continued he, with a forced smile of mockery: "You treat me as though I were of higher rank than I am. It is only princes who have a preacher in their own houses."

"And that God who requires princes to render an account of the word preached to them in their palaces, that God who now bestows upon you a token of His mercy, by sending *His* minister, though indeed a poor and unworthy one, to intercede for an innocent"

"In short, father," said Don Rodrigo, preparing to go, "I don't know what you mean: I can only suppose there must be some young girl you are concerned about. Make confidants of whom you please, but don't have the assurance to annoy a gentleman any longer."

On the movement of Don Rodrigo, the friar also advanced, reverently placed himself in his way, raised

his hands, both in an attitude of supplication, and also to detain him, and again replied, "I am concerned for her, it is true, but not more than for yourself: there are two persons who concern me more than my own life. Don Rodrigo! I can only pray for you; but this I will do with my whole heart. Do not say 'no' to me; do not keep a poor innocent in anguish and terror. One word from you will do all."

"Well," said Don Rodrigo, "since you seem to think I can do so much for this person; since you are so much interested for her"

"Well?" said Father Cristoforo, anxiously, while the behaviour and countenance of Don Rodrigo forbade his indulging in the hope which the words appeared to warrant.

"Well; advise her to come and put herself under my protection. She shall want for nothing, and no one shall dare molest her, as I am a gentleman."

At such a proposal, the indignation of the friar, hitherto with difficulty confined within bounds, burst forth without restraint. All his good resolutions of prudence and patience forsook him, the old nature usurped the place of the new; and in these cases Father Cristoforo was indeed like two different men. "Your protection!" exclaimed he, retiring a step or two, and fiercely resting on his right foot, his right hand placed on his hip, his left held up, pointing with his fore-finger towards Don Rodrigo, and two fiery-glancing eyes piercingly fixed upon him: "your protection! Woe be to you that you have thus spoken, that you have made me such a proposal. You have filled up the measure of your iniquity, and I no longer fear you."

"How are you speaking to me, friar?"

"I speak as to one who is forsaken by God, and who can no longer excite fear. I knew that this innocent was under God's protection; but you, you have now

made me feel it with so much certainty, that I have no longer need to ask protection of you. Lucia, I say—see how I pronounce this name with a bold face and unmoved expression.”

“What! in this house!”

“I pity this house; a curse is suspended over it. You will see whether the justice of God can be resisted by four walls, and four bravoës at your gates. Thought you that God had made a creature in his image, to give you the delight of tormenting her? Thought you that He would not defend her? You have despised His counsel, and you will be judged for it! The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, like yours, but God knew how to break it. Lucia is safe from you; I do not hesitate to say so, though a poor friar: and as to you, listen what I predict to you. A day will come”

Don Rodrigo had stood till now with a mingled feeling of rage and mute astonishment; but on hearing the beginning of this prediction, an undefined and mysterious fear was added to his anger. Hastily seizing the father’s outstretched arm, and raising his voice to drown that of the inauspicious prophet, he exclaimed, “Get out of my sight, rash villain—cowled rascal!”

These definite appellations calmed Father Cristoforo in a moment. The idea of submission and silence had been so long associated in his mind with that of contempt and injury, that at this compliment every feeling of warmth and enthusiasm instantly subsided, and he only resolved to listen patiently to whatever Don Rodrigo might be pleased to subjoin. Quietly, then, withdrawing his hand from the Signor’s grasp, he stood motionless, with his head bent downwards, as an aged tree, in the sudden lulling of an overbearing storm, resumes its natural position, and receives on its drooping branches the hail as Heaven sends it.

“Vile upstart!” continued Don Rodrigo; “you treat

me like an equal: but thank the cassock that covers your cowardly shoulders for saving you from the caresses that such scoundrels as you should receive, to teach them how to talk to a gentleman. Depart with sound limbs for this once, or we shall see."

So saying, he pointed with imperious scorn to a door opposite the one they had entered; and Father Cristoforo bowed his head and departed, leaving Don Rodrigo to measure, with excited steps, the field of battle.

When the friar had closed the door behind him, he perceived some one in the apartment he had entered, stealing softly along the wall, that he might not be seen from the room of conference; and he instantly recognised the aged servant who had received him at the door on his arrival. This man had lived in the family for forty years, that is, since before Don Rodrigo's birth, having been in the service of his father, who was a very different kind of man. On his death, the new master dismissed all the household, and hired a fresh set of attendants, retaining, however, this one servant, both because he was old, and because, although of a temper and habits widely different from his own, he made amends for this defect by two qualifications—a lofty idea of the dignity of the house, and long experience in its ceremonies; with the most ancient traditions and minute particulars of which he was better acquainted than any one else. In the presence of his master, the poor old man never ventured a sign, still less an expression, of his disapprobation of what he saw around him every day; but at times he could scarcely refrain from some exclamation—some reproof murmured between his lips to his fellow-servants. They, highly diverted at his remarks, would sometimes urge him to conversation, provoking him to find fault with the present state of things, and to sound the praises of the ancient way of living in the family. His censures only came to his master's ears accompanied

by a relation of the ridicule bestowed upon them, so that they merely succeeded in making him an object of contempt without resentment. On days of ceremony and entertainment, however, the old man became a person of serious importance.

Father Cristoforo looked at him as he passed, saluted him, and was about to go forward; but the old man approached with a mysterious air, put his fore-finger on his lips, and then beckoned to him, with the said fore-finger, to accompany him into a dark passage, where, in an under tone, he said, "Father, I have heard all, and I want to speak to you."

"Speak up, then, at once, my good man."

"Not here! woe to us if the master saw us! But I can learn much, and will try to come to-morrow to the convent."

"Is there some project?"

"Something's in the wind, that's certain: I had already suspected it; but now I will be on the watch, and will find out all. Leave it to me. I happen to see and hear things . . . strange things! I am in a house! . . . But I wish to save my soul."

"God bless you!" said the friar, softly pronouncing the benediction, as he laid his hand on the servant's head, who, though much older than himself, bent before him with the respect of a son. "God will reward you," continued the friar: "don't fail to come to me to-morrow."

"I will be sure to come," replied the servant: "but do you go quickly, and . . . for Heaven's sake . . . don't betray me." So saying, and looking cautiously around, he went out, at the other end of the passage, into a hall that led to the court-yard; and seeing the coast clear, beckoned to the good friar, whose face responded to the last injunction more plainly than any protestations could have done. The old man pointed to the door, and the friar departed without further delay.

This servant had been listening at his master's door. Had he done right? And was Father Cristoforo right in praising him for it? According to the commonest and most-generally-received rules, it was a very dishonest act; but might not this case be regarded as an exception? And are there not exceptions to the most-generally-received rules?

These are questions which we leave the reader to resolve at his pleasure. We do not pretend to give judgment: it is enough that we relate facts.

Having reached the road, and turned his back upon this wild beast's den, Father Cristoforo breathed more freely, as he hastened down the descent, his face flushed,



and his mind, as every one may imagine, agitated and confused by what he had recently heard and said. But the unexpected proffer of the old man had been a great relief to him; it seemed as if Heaven had given him a visible token of its protection. Here is a clue

thought he, that Providence has put into my hands. In this very house, too! and without my even dreaming of looking for one! Engaged in such thoughts, he raised his eyes towards the west, and seeing the setting sun already touching the summit of the mountain, was reminded that the day was fast drawing to a close. He therefore quickened his steps, though weary and weak, after the many annoyances of the day, that he might have time to carry back his intelligence, such as it was, to his protégés, and arrive at the convent before night; for this was one of the most absolute and strictly-enforced rules of the Capuchin discipline.

In the meantime, there had been plans proposed and debated in Lucia's cottage, with which it is necessary to acquaint the reader. After the departure of the friar, the three friends remained sometime silent; Lucia, with a sorrowful heart, preparing the dinner; Renzo irresolute, and changing his position every moment, to avoid the sight of her mournful face, yet without heart to leave her; Agnese, apparently intent upon the reel she was winding, though, in fact, she was deliberating upon a plan; and when she thought it sufficiently matured, she broke the silence with these words:—

“Listen, my children. If you have as much courage and dexterity as is required; if you will trust your mother, (this *your mother*, addressed to both, made Lucia's heart bound within her,) I will undertake to get you out of this difficulty, better, perhaps, and more quickly than Father Cristoforo, though he is such a man.” Lucia stopped and looked at her mother with a face more expressive of wonder than of confidence in so magnificent a promise; and Renzo hastily exclaimed, “Courage? dexterity?—tell me, tell me what can we do?”

“If you were married,” continued Agnese, “it would be the great difficulty out of the way—wouldn't it? and couldn't we easily find a remedy for all the rest?”

"Is there any doubt?" said Renzo: "if we were married. . . . One may live anywhere; and, at Bergamo, not far from here, a silk-weaver would be received with open arms. You know how often my eousin Bortolo has wanted me to go and live with him, that I might make a fortune, as he has done; and if I have never listened to him, it is you know, because my heart was here. Once married, we would all go thither together, and live in blessed peace, out of this villain's reach, and far from the temptation to do a rash deed. Isn't it true, Lucia?"

"Yes," said Lucia; "but how?"

"As I have told you," replied Agnese. "Be bold and expert, and the thing is easy."

"Easy!" at the same moment exclaimed the two lovers, to whom it had become so strangely and sadly difficult.

"Easy, if you know how to go about it," replied Agnese. "Listen attentively to me, and I will try and make you understand it. I have heard say, by people who ought to know, and I have seen it myself in one case, that to solemnize a marriage, a curate, of course, is necessary, but not his good-will or consent; it is enough if he is present."

"How can this be?" asked Renzo.

"Listen, and you shall hear. There must be two witnesses, nimble and well agreed. They must go to the priest; the point is to take him by surprise, that he mayn't have time to escape. The man says, 'Signor Curate, this is my wife;' the woman says, 'Signor Curate, this is my husband.' It is necessary that the curate and the witnesses hear it, and then the marriage is just as valid and sacred as if the Pope had blessed it. When once the words are spoken, the curate may fret, and fume, and storm, but it will do no good; you are man and wife."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lucia.

“What!” said Agnese, “do you think I have learnt nothing in the thirty years I was in the world before you? The thing is just as I told you; and a friend of mine is a proof of it, who, wishing to be married against the will of her parents, did as I was saying, and gained her end. The curate suspected it, and was on the watch; but they knew so well how to go about it, that they arrived just at the right moment, said the words, and became man and wife; though she, poor thing! repented of it before three days were over.”

It was, in fact, as Agnes had represented it; marriages contracted in this manner were then, and are even to this day, acknowledged valid. As, however, this expedient was never resorted to but by those who had met with some obstacle or refusal in the ordinary method, the priest took great care to avoid such forced co-operation; and if one of them happened to be surprised by a couple, accompanied with witnesses, he tried every means of escape, like Proteus in the hands of those who would have made him prophesy by force.

“If it were true, Lucia!” said Renzo, fixing his eyes upon her with a look of imploring expectation.

“What! if it were true?” replied Agnese. “You think, then, I tell lies. I do my best for you, and am not believed: very well; get out of the difficulty as you can: I wash my hands of it.”

“Ah, no! don’t forsake us,” cried Renzo. “I said so because it appeared too good a thing. I place myself in your hands, and will consider you as if you were really my mother.”

These words instantly dispelled the momentary indignation of Agnese, and made her forget a resolution which, in reality, had only been in word.

“But why, then, mother,” said Lucia, in her usual gentle manner, “why didn’t this plan come into Father Cristoforo’s mind?”

"Into his mind?" replied Agnese; "do you think it didn't come into his mind? But he wouldn't speak of it."

"Why?" demanded they both at once.

"Because . . . because, if you must know it, the friars think that it is not exactly a proper thing."

"How can it help standing firm, and being well done, when it is done?" said Renzo.

"How can I tell you?" replied Agnese. "Other people have made the law as they pleased, and we poor people can't understand all. And then, how many things . . . Sec; it is like giving a Christian a blow. It isn't right, but when it is once given, not even the Pope can recall it."

"If it isn't right," said Lucia, "we ought not to do it."

"What!" said Agnese, "would I give you advice contrary to the fear of God? If it were against the will of your parents, and to marry a rogue . . . but when I am satisfied, and it is to wed this youth, and he who makes all this disturbance is a villain, and the Signor Curate . . ."

"It is as clear as the sun," said Renzo.

"One need not speak to Father Cristoforo, before doing it," continued Agnese; "but when it is once done, and has well succeeded, what do you think the Father will say to you?—Ah, daughter! it was a sad error, but it is done. The friars, you know, must talk so. But trust me, in his heart he will be very well satisfied."

Without being able to answer such reasoning, Lucia did not think it appeared very convincing; but Renzo, quite encouraged, said, "Since it is thus, the thing is done."

"Gently," said Agnese. "The witnesses, where are they to be found? Then, how will you manage to get

at the Signor Curate, who has been shut up in his house two days? And how make him stand when you do get at him? for though he is weighty enough naturally, I dare venture to say, when he sees you make your appearance in such a guise, he will become as nimble as a cat, and flee like the devil from holy water."

"I have found a way—I've found one," cried Renzo, striking the table with his clenched hand, till he made the dinner-things quiver and rattle with the blow; and he proceeded to relate his design, which Agnese entirely approved.

"It is all confusion," said Lucia; "it is not perfectly honest. Till now we have always acted sincerely; let us go on in faith, and God will help us; Father Cristoforo said so. Do listen to his advice."

"Be guided by those who know better than you," said Agnese, gravely. "What need is there to ask advice? God bids us help ourselves, and then He will help us. We will tell the Father all about it when it is over."

"Lucia," said Renzo, "will you fail me now? Have we not done all like good Christians? Ought we not now to have been man and wife? Didn't the Curate himself fix the day and hour? And whose fault is it, if we are now obliged to use a little cunning? No, no; you won't fail me. I am going, and will come back with an answer." So saying, he gave Lucia an imploring look, and Agnese a very knowing glance, and hastily took his departure.

It is said that trouble sharpens the wit; and Renzo, who, in the upright and straightforward path he had hitherto followed, had never had occasion to sharpen his in any great degree, had, in this instance, planned a design that would have done honour to a lawyer. He went directly, as he had purposed, to a cottage near at hand, belonging to a certain Tonio, whom he found

busy in the kitchen, with one knee resting on the stand of a chafing-dish, holding in his right hand the handle of a saucepan, that stood on the burning embers, and stirring with a broken rolling-pin, a little grey *polenta*,* of Turkey flour. The mother, brother, and wife of Tonio, were seated at the table; and three or four little children stood around, waiting, with eyes eagerly fixed on the saucepan, till the gruel should be ready to pour out. But the pleasure was wanting which the sight of dinner usually gives to those who have earned it by hard labour. The quantity of the *polenta* was rather in proportion to the times than to the number and inclinations of the household; and each one eyeing the common food with envious looks of strong desire, seemed to be measuring the extent of appetite likely to survive it. While Renzo was exchanging salutations with the family, Tonio poured out the *polenta* into the wooden trencher that stood ready to receive it, and it looked like a little moon in a large circle of vapour. Nevertheless, the women courteously said to Renzo, "Will you take some with us?"—a compliment that the Lombard peasant never fails to pay to any one who finds him at a meal, even though the visitor were a rich glutton just risen from table, and he were at the last mouthful.

"Thank you," replied Renzo; "I only came to say a word or two to Tonio; and if you like, Tonio, not to disturb your family, we can go dine at the inn, and talk there." This proposal was as acceptable to Tonio as it was unexpected; and the women, not unwillingly, saw one competitor for the *polenta* removed, and that the most formidable. Tonio did not require a second asking, and they set off together.

Arrived at the village inn, they sat down at their ease, perfectly alone, since the prevailing poverty had banished all the usual frequenters of this scene of mirth and

* A thick gruel, made of flower and water, boiled together.

joviality. They called for the little that was to be had, and having emptied a glass of wine, Renzo addressed Tonio with an air of mystery; "If you will do me a small favour, I will do you a great one."

"What is it?—tell me! I'm at your service," replied Tonio, pouring out another glass; "I'm ready to go into the fire for you to-day."

"You are in debt twenty-five livres to the Signor Curate for the rent of his field that you worked last year."

"Ah, Renzo, Renzo! you've spoiled your kindness. Why did you remind me of it now? You've put to flight all my good will towards you."

"If I reminded you of your debt," said Renzo, "it is because I intend, if you like, to give you the means of paying it."

"Do you really mean so?"

"I do really. Well, are you content?"

"Content? I should think so, indeed! if it were for no other reason than to get rid of those tormenting looks and shakes of the head the Signor Curate gives me every time I meet him. And then it is always—'Tonio, remember: Tonio, when shall I see you to settle this business?' He goes so far, that, when he fixes his eyes upon me in preaching, I'm half afraid he will say publiely: Those twenty-five livres! I wish the twenty-five livres were far away! And then he will have to give me back my wife's gold neeklaee, and I could change it into so much *polenta*. But"

"But, if you'll do me a little service, the twenty-five livres are ready."

"With all my heart; go on."

"But!" said Renzo, laying his finger across his lips.

"Need you tell me that? You know me."

"The Signor Curate has been starting some absurd objections, to delay my marriage. They tell me for

certain, that if we go before him with two witnesses, and I say, This is my wife; and Lucia, This is my husband; the marriage is valid. Do you understand me?"

"You want me to go as a witness?"

"Yes."

"And you'll pay the twenty-five livres for me?"

"That is what I mean."

"He's a goose that would fail."

"But we must find another witness."

"I have him! That young clownish brother of mine, Gervase, will do anything I bid him. You'll pay him with something to drink?"

"And to eat, too," replied Renzo. "We'll bring him here to make merry with us. But will he know what to do?"

"I'll teach him. You know I have got his share of brains."

"To-morrow"

"Well."

"Towards evening"

"Very well."

"But!" said Renzo, again putting his finger on his lips.

"Poh!" replied Tonio, bending his head on his right shoulder, and raising his left hand, with a look that seemed to say, Do you doubt me?

"But if your wife questions you, as without doubt she will"

"I owe my wife some lies, and so many, that I don't know if I shall ever manage to balance the account. I'll find some idle story to put her heart at rest, I warrant you."

"To-morrow," said Renzo, "we will make arrangements, that everything may go on smoothly."

So saying, they left the inn, Tonio bending his steps homewards, and contriving some tale to relate to the

women, and Renzo to give an account of the concerted arrangements.

In the meanwhile, Agnese had been vainly endeavouring to convince her daughter. To every argument, Lucia opposed one side or other of her dilemma; either the thing is wrong, and we ought not to do it, or it is not wrong, and why not tell it to Father Cristoforo?

Renzo arrived quite triumphant, and reported his success, finishing with a *ahn?*—a Milanese interjection, which signifies—Am I a man or not? can you find a better plan? would it ever have entered your head? and a hundred other such things.

Lucia shook her head, doubtfully; but the two enthusiasts paid little attention to it, as one does to a child when one despairs of making it understand all the reasons of a thing, and determines to induce it by entreaties or authority to do as it is required.

“It goes on well,” said Agnese, “very well; but.... you haven’t thought of everything.”

“What is wanting?” replied Renzo.

“Perpetua!—you haven’t thought of Perpetua! She will admit Tonio and his brother well enough, but you—you two—just think! You will have to keep her at a distance, as one keeps a boy from a pear-tree full of ripe fruit.”

“How shall we manage?” said Renzo, beginning to think.

“See, now! *I* have thought of that, too; I will go with you; and I have a secret that will draw her away, and engage her, so that she shan’t see you, and you can go in. I’ll call her out, and will touch a chord.... You shall see.”

“Bless you!” exclaimed Renzo; “I always said you are our help in everything.”

“But all this is of no use,” said Agnese, “unless we can persuade Lucia, who persists in saying it is a sin.”

Renzo brought in all his eloquence to his aid, but Lucia continued immoveable.

"I cannot answer all your arguments," said she; "but I see that, to do what you want, we shall be obliged to use a great deal of disguise, falsehood, and deceit. Ah, Renzo! we didn't begin so. I wish to be your wife"—and she could never pronounce this word, or give expression to this desire, without a deep flush overspreading her cheek—"I wish to be your wife, but in the right way—in the fear of God, at the altar. Let us leave all to Him who is above. Do you think He cannot find means to help us better than we, with all these deceitful ways? And why make a mystery of it to Father Cristoforo?"

The dispute was still prolonged, and seemed not likely to come to a speedy conclusion, when the hasty tread of sandals, and the sound of a rustling cassock, resembling the noise produced by repeated gusts of wind in a slackened sail, announced the approach of Father Cristoforo. There was instant silence, and Agnese had scarcely time to whisper in Lucia's ear, "Be sure you say nothing about it."



CHAPTER VII.

FATHER CRISTOFORO arrived with the air of a good general, who having lost an important battle, without any fault on his part,—distressed, but not discouraged; thoughtful, but not confounded; retreating, but not put to flight; turns his steps where necessity calls for his presence, fortifying threatened quarters, regulating his troops, and giving new orders.

“Peace be with you!” said he, as he entered. “There is nothing to hope from man; you have therefore more need to trust in God, and I have already had a pledge of His protection.”

Although none of the party had anticipated much from Father Cristoforo’s attempt, (since, to see a powerful nobleman desist from an act of oppression, unless he were overcome by a superior power, from regard to

the entreaties of a disarmed suppliant, was rather an unheard-of, than a rare, occurrence,) yet the melancholy certainty came as a blow upon them all. Their heads involuntarily drooped, but anger quickly prevailed over depression in Renzo's mind. The announcement found him already wounded and irritated by a succession of painful surprises, fallacious attempts, and disappointed hopes, and, above all, exasperated at this moment by the repulses of Lucia.

"I should like to know," said he, gnashing his teeth and raising his voice as he had never before done in the presence of Father Cristoforo; "I should like to know what reasons this dog gives for asserting . . . for asserting that my bride should not be my bride."

"Poor Renzo!" replied the friar, with a look and accent of pity that kindly recommended peaceableness; "if the powerful, who do such deeds of injustice, were always obliged to give their reasons, things would not be as they are."

"Did the dog then say that he would not, *because* he would not?"

"He didn't even say that, my poor fellow! It would be something, if, to commit iniquity, they were obliged openly to confess it."

"But he must have told you something; what did this infernal firebrand say?"

"I heard his words, but I cannot repeat them to you. The words of a powerful wicked man are violent, but contradictory. He can be angry that you are suspicious of him, and at the same time make you feel that your suspicions are well-founded; he can insult you, and call himself offended; ridicule you, and ask your opinion; threaten, and complain; be insolent, and irreprehensible. Ask no more. He neither mentioned the name of this innocent, nor your own; he did not even appear to know you, nor did he say he designed any-

thing; but . . . but I understood too well that he is immoveable. However, confidence in God, you poor creatures!" turning to Agnese and Lucia, "don't give up in despair! And you, Renzo . . . oh! believe me I can put myself in your place; I can feel what passes in your heart. But, patience; it is a poor word, a bitter one to those who have no faith; but you—will you not allow God one day, two days, or whatever time he may please to take to clear you and give you justice? The time is His; and He has promised us much. Leave Him to work, Renzo; and . . . believe me, I already have a clue that may lead to something for your help. I cannot tell you more at present. To-morrow I shall not come here; I must be at the convent all day, for you. You, Renzo, try to come to me; or if, by any unforeseen accident, you cannot, send a trustworthy man, or a lad of discretion, by whom I may let you know what may happen. It grows dark; I shall have to make haste to reach the convent. Faith, courage, and good night."

Having said this, he hastily left them, and made his way rapidly along a crooked, stony by-path, that he might not be late at the convent, and run the risk of a severe reprimand, or, what would have grieved him more, the infliction of a penance, which might have disabled him on the morrow for any undertaking which the service of his protégés might require.

"Did you hear what he said about . . . I don't know what . . . about a clue that he held in his hand to help us?" said Lucia. "It is best to trust in him; he is a man who, if he promises ten . . ."

"I know there is not his like," interrupted Agnese; "but he ought to have spoken more clearly, or, at least taken me aside and told me what it was."

"Idle prating! I'll put an end to it, that I will!" interrupted Renzo, in his turn, as he paced furiously up

and down the room, with a look and tone that left no doubt as to the meaning of his words.

“ Oh, Renzo !” exclaimed Lucia.

“ What do you mean ?” cried Agnese.

“ Why need I tell you ? I’ll put an end to it ! Though he has a hundred, a thousand devils in his soul, he’s flesh and blood, after all.”

“ No, no ! for heaven’s sake !” began Lucia, but tears choked her utterance.

“ This is not proper language, even in jest,” replied Agnese.

“ In jest !” cried Renzo, planting himself directly before Agnese, as she sat, and fixing on her two fearful-looking eyes. “ In jest ! you shall see whether I am in jest or not.”

“ Ah, Renzo !” said Lucia, scarcely able to articulate for sobs, “ I never saw you so before.”

“ Don’t talk so, for Heaven’s sake !” replied Agnese, hastily, lowering her voice. “ Don’t you remember how many arms he has at his bidding ? And then, there is always justice to be had against the poor God defend them !”

“ I will get justice for myself, I will ! It is time now. The thing isn’t easy, I know. The ruffian is well defended, dog that he is ! I know how it is ; but never mind. Patience and resolution and the time will soon arrive. Yes, I will get justice. I’ll free the country, and people will bless me ! And then in four bounds”

The horror of Lucia at these explicit declarations repressed her sobs, and inspired her with courage to speak. Raising from her hands her face bathed in tears, she addressed Renzo in a mournful, but resolute tone : “ You no longer care, then, about having me for your wife ? I promised myself to a youth who had the fear of God ; but a man who has were he safe

from all justice and vengeance, were he the son of a king”

“Very well!” cried Renzo, his face more than ever convulsed with fury; “I won’t have you, then; but he shan’t either. I will be here without you, and he in the abode of”

“Ah, no, for pity’s sake, don’t say so; don’t look so furious! No, no, I cannot bear to see you thus,” exclaimed Lucia, weeping, and joining her hands in an attitude of earnest supplication; while Agnese repeatedly called him by name, and seized hold of his shoulders, his arms, and his hands, to pacify him. He stood immoveable, thoughtful, almost overcome at the sight of Lucia’s imploring countenance; then suddenly gazed at her sternly, drew back, stretched out his arm, and pointing with his finger towards her, burst forth: “Her! yes, he wants *her*! He must die!”

“And *I*, what harm have I done you, that you should kill *me*?” said Lucia, throwing herself on her knees.

“You!” said he, with a voice expressive of anger, though of a far different nature; “you! what good do you wish me? What proof have you given me? Haven’t I begged, and begged, and begged? . . . Have I been able to obtain”

“Yes, yes,” replied she, precipitately; “I will go to the Curate’s to-morrow; I will go now, if you like. Only be yourself again, I will go.”

“You promise me?” said Renzo, his voice and expression rendered in an instant more human.

“I promise you.”

“You have promised me?”

“Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!” exclaimed Agnese, doubly satisfied.

Did Renzo, in the midst of his anger, discern the advantage that might be taken of Lucia’s terror? And did he not practise a little artifice to increase it, that he

ight use this advantage? Our author protests he knows nothing about the matter; nor, I think, did even Renzo himself know very well. At any rate, he was undoubtedly enraged beyond measure with Don Rodrigo, and ardently desired Lucia's consent; and when two powerful passions struggle together in a man's mind, no one, not even the most patient, can always clearly discern one voice from the other, or say, with certainty, which of them predominates.

"I *have* promised you," replied Lucia, with an accent of timid and affectionate reproof; "but you have also promised not to make any disturbance—to submit yourself to Father"

"Come, now, for whose sake did I get into a passion? Do you want to draw back? And will you oblige me to do a rash thing?"

"No, no," said Lucia, ready to relapse into her former fears. "I have promised, and I will not draw back. But see how you have made me promise; God forbid that"

"Why will you prophesy evil, Lucia? God knows we do no wrong to anybody."

"Promise me, at least, this shall be the last time."

"I promise you, upon my word."

"But this once you will stand by him," said Agnese.

Here the author confesses his ignorance of another matter, and that is, whether Lucia was absolutely, and on every account, dissatisfied at being obliged to give her consent. We follow his example, and leave the point undecided.

Renzo would willingly have prolonged the conversation, and allotted their several parts in the proceedings of the morrow; but it was already dark, and the women wished him good night, as they thought it scarcely decorous that he should remain any longer with them at so late an hour.

The night was passed by all three as well as could be expected, considering that it followed a day of such excitement and misfortune, and preceded one fixed upon for an important undertaking of doubtful issue. Renzo made his appearance early next morning, and concerted with the women, or rather with Agnese, the grand operations of the evening, alternately suggesting and removing difficulties, foreseeing obstacles, and both beginning, by turns, to describe the scene as if they were relating a past event. Lucia listened; and, without approving in words what she could not agree to in her heart, promised to do as well as she was able.

"Are you going down to the convent to see Father Cristoforo, as he bid you, last night?" said Agnese to Renzo.

"Not I," replied he; "you know what discerning eyes the Father has; he will read in my looks, as if it were written in a book, that there's something in the wind; and if he begins to question me, I can't get off it easily. And, besides, I must stay here to arrange matters. It will be better for you to send somebody."

"I will send Menico."

"Very well," replied Renzo; and he set off to arrange matters, as he had said.

Agnese went to a neighbouring cottage to ask for Menico, a sprightly and very sensible lad for his age, who, through the medium of cousins and sisters-in-law, came to be a sort of nephew to the dame. She asked his parents for him, as for a loan, and begged she might keep him the whole day, "for a particular service," said she. Having obtained permission, she led him to her kitchen, gave him his breakfast, and bid him go to Pescarenico, and present himself to Father Cristoforo, who would send him back with a message at the right time. "Father Cristoforo, that fine old man, you know, with a white beard, who is called the Saint"

"I understand," said Menico; "he who speaks so kindly to the children, and sometimes gives them pictures."

"Just so, Menico. And if he bids you wait some time at the convent, don't wander away; and be sure you don't go with other boys to the lake to throw stones into the water, nor to watch them fish, nor to play with the nets hung up to dry, nor"

"Poh, aunt; I am no longer a child."

"Well, be prudent; and when you come back with the answer look; these two fine new *parpagliole* are for you."

"Give me them now, that"

"No, no, you will play with them. Go, and behave well, that you may have some more."

In the course of this long morning many strange things happened, which roused not a little suspicion in the already-disturbed minds of Agnese and Lucia. A beggar, neither thin nor ragged, as they generally were, and of somewhat dark and sinister aspect, came and asked alms, in God's name, at the same time looking narrowly around. A piece of bread was given him, which he received, and placed in his basket, with ill-dissembled indifference. He then loitered, and made many inquiries, with a mixed air of impudence and hesitation, to which Agnese endeavoured to make replies exactly contrary to the truth. When about to depart, he pretended to mistake the door, and went to that at the foot of the stairs, glancing hastily upwards, as well as he could. On their calling him back—"Hey! hey! where are you going, my good man?—this way!" he turned and went out by the door that was pointed out to him, excusing himself with a submission, and an affected humility, that ill-accorded with the fierce and hard features of his face. After his departure, they continued to mark, from time to time, other suspicious and

strange figures. It was not easy to discern what kind of men they were; yet still they could not believe them to be the unpretending passers-by they wished to appear. One would enter under pretence of asking the way; others, arriving at the door, slackened their pace, and peeped through the little yard into the room, as if wishing to see without exciting suspicion. At last, towards noon, these annoying and alarming appearances ceased. Agnese got up occasionally, and crossed the little yard to the street-door, to reconnoitre; and after looking anxiously around on either side, returned with the intelligence, "There's nobody;" words which she uttered with pleasure, and Lucia heard with satisfaction, neither one nor the other knowing exactly the reason why. But an undefined disquietude haunted their steps, and, with Lucia especially, in some degree cooled the courage they had summoned up for the proceedings of the evening.

The reader, however, must be told something more definite about these mysterious wanderers; and to relate it in order, we must turn back a step or two, and find Don Rodrigo, whom we left yesterday after dinner by himself, in one of the rooms of his palace, after the departure of Father Cristoforo.

Don Rodrigo, as we have said, paced backwards and forwards with long strides in this spacious apartment, surrounded on all sides by the family portraits of many generations. When he reached the wall and turned round, his eye rested upon the figure of one of his warlike ancestors, the terror of his enemies, and of his own soldiers; who, with a stern grim countenance, his short hair standing erect from his forehead, his large sharp whiskers covering his cheeks, and his hooked chin, stood like a warrior, clothed in a complete suit of steel armour, with his right hand pressing his side, and the left grasping the hilt of his sword. Don Rodrigo gazed upon it,

and when he arrived beneath it, and turned back, beheld before him another of his forefathers, a magistrate, and the terror of litigants, seated in a high chair, covered with crimson velvet, enveloped in an ample black robe, so that he was entirely black, excepting for a white collar, with two large bands, and a lining of sable, turned wrong side outwards, (this was the distinctive mark of senators, but only worn in winter; for which reason the picture of a senator in summer-clothing is never met with,) squalid, and frowning; he held in his hand a memorial, and seemed to be saying, "We shall see." On the one hand was a matron, the terror of her maids; on the other, an abbot, the terror of his monks; in short, they were all persons who had been objects of terror while alive, and who now inspired dread by their likenesses. In the presence of such remembrancers, Don Rodrigo became enraged and ashamed, as he reflected that a friar had dared to come to him with the parable of Nathan; and his mind could find no peace. He would form a plan of revenge, and then abandon it; seek how, at the same time, to satisfy his passion, and what he called his honour; and sometimes, hearing the beginning of the prophecy resounding in his ears, he would involuntarily shudder, and be almost inclined to give up the idea of the two satisfactions. At last, for the sake of doing something, he called a servant, and desired him to make an apology for him to the company, and to say that he was detained by urgent business. The servant returned with the intelligence that the gentlemen, having left their compliments, had taken their leave.

"And Count Attilio?" asked Don Rodrigo, still pacing the room.

"He left with the gentlemen, illustrious Signor."

"Very well; six followers to accompany me—quickly! my sword, cloak, and hat, immediately!"

The servant replied by a bow, and withdrew, return-

ing shortly with a rich sword, which his master buckled on, a cloak which he threw over his shoulders, and a hat, ornamented with lofty plumes, which he placed on his head, and fastened with a haughty air. He then moved forward, and found the six braves at the door, completely armed, who, making way for him, with a low bow, followed as his train. More surly, more haughty, and more supercilious than usual, he left his palace, and took the way towards Lecco, amidst the salutations and profound bows of the peasants he happened to meet; and the ill-mannered wight who would have ventured to pass without taking off his hat, might consider he had purchased the exemption at a cheap rate, had the braves in the train been contented merely to enforce respect by a blow on the head. To these salutations Don Rodrigo made no acknowledgment; but to men of higher rank, though still indisputably inferior to his own, he replied with constrained courtesy. He did not chance this time, but when he did happen to meet with the Spanish Signor, the Governor of the Castle, the salutations were equally profound on both sides; it was like the meeting of two potentates, who have nothing to share between them, yet, for convenience sake, pay respect to each other's rank. To pass away the time, and, by the sight of far different faces and behaviour, to banish the image of the friar, which continually haunted his mind, Don Rodrigo entered a house where a large party was assembled, and where he was received with that officious and respectful cordiality reserved for those who are greatly courted, and greatly feared. Late at night he returned to his own palace, and found that Count Attilio had just arrived; and they sat down to supper together, Don Rodrigo buried in thought, and very silent.

“Cousin, when will you pay your wager?” asked Count Attilio, in a malicious, and at the same time

rallying, tone, as soon as the table was cleared, and the servants had departed.

“ St. Martin has not yet passed.”

“ Well, remember you will have to pay it soon; for all the saints in the calendar will pass before”

“ This has to be seen yet.”

“ Cousin, you want to play the politician; but I understand all; and I am so certain of having won my wager, that I am ready to lay another.”

“ What?”

“ That the Father the Father I mean, in short, that this friar has converted you.”

“ It is a mere fancy of your own.”

“ Converted, cousin; converted, I say. I, for my part, am delighted at it. What a fine sight it will be to see you quite penitent, with downcast eyes! And what triumph for this Father! How proudly he must have returned to the convent! You are not such fish as they catch every day, nor in every net. You may be sure they will bring you forward as an example; and when they go on a mission to some little distance, they will talk of your acts. I can fancy I hear them.” And, speaking through his nose, accompanying the words with caricatured gestures, he continued, in a sermon-like tone, “ ‘ In a certain part of the world, which from motives of high respect we forbear to name, there lived, my dear hearers, and there still lives, a dissolute gentleman, the friend of women rather than of good men, who, accustomed to make no distinctions, had set his eyes upon’ ”

“ That will do enough,” interrupted Don Rodrigo, half amused and half annoyed: “ If you wish to repeat the wager, I am ready, too.”

“ Indeed! perhaps, then, *you* have converted the Father?”

“ Don’t talk to me about him: and as to the bet,

Saint Martin will decide." The curiosity of the Count was aroused; he put numberless questions, but Don Rodrigo contrived to evade them all, referring everything to the day of decision, and unwilling to communicate designs which were neither begun nor absolutely determined upon.

Next morning, Don Rodrigo was himself again. The slight compunction that "*a day will come*" had awakened in his mind, had vanished with the dreams of the night; and nothing remained but a feeling of deep indignation, rendered more vivid by remorse for his passing weakness. The remembrance of his late almost-triumphant walk, of the profound salutations, and the receptions he had met with, together with the rallying of his cousin, had contributed not a little to renew his former spirit. Hardly risen, he sent for Griso.—Something important,—thought the servant to whom the order was given; for the man who bore this assumed name was no less a personage than the head of the braves, to whom the boldest and most dangerous enterprises were confided, who was the most trusted by his master, and was devoted to him, at all risks, by gratitude and interest. Guilty of murder, he had sought the protection of Don Rodrigo, to escape the pursuit of justice; and he, by taking him into his service, had sheltered him from the reach of persecution. Here, by engaging in every crime that was required of him, he was secured from the punishment of the first fault. To Don Rodrigo the acquisition had been of no small importance; for this Griso, besides being undoubtedly the most courageous of the household, was also a specimen of what his master had been able to attempt with impunity against the laws; so that Don Rodrigo's power was aggrandized both in reality and in common opinion.

“Griso!” said Don Rodrigo, “in this emergency it will be seen what you are worth. Before to-morrow, Lucia must be in this palace.”

“It shall never be said that Griso shrank from the command of his noble protector.”

“Take as many men as you want, dispose and order them as you think best, only let the thing succeed well. But, above all, be sure you do her no harm.”

“Signor, a little fright, that she may not make too much noise one cannot do less.”

“Fear I see is inevitable. But don’t you touch a hair of her head; and, above all, treat her with the greatest respect. Do you understand?”

“Signor, I could not pluck a flower from its stalk, and bring it to your lordship, without touching it a little. But I will do no more than is necessary.”

“Beware you do not. And how will you manage?”

“I was thinking, Signor. It is fortunate that the house is at the end of the village. We shall want a place to conceal ourselves in; and at a little distance there’s that uninhabited building in the middle of the fields, that house but your lordship knows nothing of these things a house that was burnt down a few years ago; and there have been no funds to rebuild it, so it is forsaken, and is haunted by witches; but it is not Saturday, and I don’t care for them. The villagers are so superstitious, they wouldn’t enter it any night of the week for a treasure, so we may safely dispose ourselves there, without any fear of being disturbed in our plans.”

“Very good: and what then?”

Here Griso went on to propose, and Don Rodrigo to discuss, till they had, together, concerted a way to bring the enterprise to an end without a trace of its authors re-

maining. They even contrived means to turn all the suspicions, by making false indications, upon another quarter; to impose silence upon poor Agnese; to inspire Renzo with such fear as would overbalance his grief, efface the thought of having recourse to the law, and even the wish to complain; and arranged all the other minor villanies necessary to the success of this principal one. We will omit the account of these consultations, however, because, as the reader will perceive, they are not necessary to the comprehension of the story, and it will only be tedious, both to him and us, to entertain ourselves for any length of time with the discussions of these two detestable villains. It will suffice to say that, as Griso was on the point of leaving the room, to go about the execution of his undertaking at once, Don Rodrigo called him back, and said, "Listen: if by any chance this rash clown should molest you to-night, it would not be amiss if you were to give him something to remember, on his shoulders, by way of anticipation. By this means, the command to keep quiet, which shall be intimated to him to-morrow, will more surely take effect. But don't go to look for him, lest you should spoil what is of more importance. Do you understand me?"

"Leave it to me," replied Griso, bowing with an obsequious and ostentatious air, as he departed.

The morning was spent in reconnoitering the neighbourhood. The feigned beggar who had intruded himself so pertinaciously into Agnese's humble cottage, was no other than Griso, who had come to get an idea of the plan of the house by sight; the pretended passengers were his vile followers, who, operating under his orders, required a less minute acquaintance with the place. Their observations being made, they withdrew from notice, lest they should excite too much suspicion.

When they returned to the palace, Griso made his report, arranged definitively the plan of the enterprise, assigned to each his different part, and gave his instructions. All this could not be transacted without the old servant's observation, who, with his eyes and ears constantly on the alert, discovered that they were plotting some great undertaking. By dint of watching and questioning, getting half a hint here, and another half there, commenting in his own mind on ambiguous inferences, and interpreting mysterious departures, he at length came to a pretty clear knowledge of all the designs of the evening. But when he was assured of them, it was very near the time, and already a small detachment of bravoës had left the palace, and set off to conceal themselves in the ruined building. The poor old man, although he well knew what a dangerous game he was playing, and feared, besides, that he was doing no efficient service, yet failed not to fulfil his engagement. He went out, under pretence of taking the air, and proceeded in great haste to the convent, to give Father Cristoforo the promised information. Shortly afterwards, a second party of bravoës were sent out, one or two at a time, that they might not appear to be one company. Griso made up the rear, and then nothing remained behind but a litter, which was to be brought to the place of rendezvous after dark. When they were all assembled there, Griso despatched three of them to the inn in the village; one was to place himself at the door, to watch the movements in the street, and to give notice when all the inhabitants had retired to rest; the other two were to remain inside, gaming and drinking, as if enjoying themselves, but were also to be on the look-out, if anything was to be seen. Griso, with the body of the troop, waited in ambuscade till the time of action should arrive.

The poor old man was still on his way, the three scouts had arrived at their post, and the sun was setting, when Renzo entered the cottage, and said to the women, "Tonio and Gervase are here outside: I am going with them to sup at the inn; and at the sound of the Ave-Maria we will come to fetch you. Come, Lucia, courage; all depends upon a moment." Lucia sighed, and replied, "Oh yes, courage!" with a tone that belied her words.

When Renzo and his two companions reached the inn, they found the bravo already there on the watch, leaning with his back against one of the jambs of the doorway, so as to occupy half its width, his arms folded across his breast, and glancing with a prying look to the right and left, showing alternately the blacks and whites of two griffin-like eyes. A flat cap of crimson velvet, put on sideways, covered half the lock of hair which, parted on a dark forehead, terminated in tresses confined by a comb at the back of the head. He held in one hand a short cudgel; his weapons, properly speaking, were not visible, but one had only to look at his face, and even a child would have guessed that he had as many under his clothes as he could carry. When Renzo, the foremost of the three, approached him and seemed prepared to enter, the bravo fixed his eyes upon him, without attempting to make way; but the youth, intent on avoiding any questions or disputes, as people generally are who have an intricate undertaking in hand, did not even stop to say "make room;" but grazing the other door-post, pushed, side-foremost, through the opening left by this Caryatides. His companions were obliged to practise the same manœuvre, if they wished to enter. When they got in, they saw the others whose voices they had heard outside, sitting at a table, playing at *Mora*,* both exclaiming at once, and alternately pouring

* See Note at end of Chapter.

out something to drink from a large flask placed between them. They fixed their eyes steadily on the new comers; and one of them, especially, holding his right hand extended in the air, with three enormous fingers just *shot* forth, and his mouth formed to utter the word "six," which burst forth at the moment, eyed Renzo from head to foot, and glanced first at his companion, and then at the one at the door, who replied with a nod of his head. Renzo, suspicious and doubtful, looked at his friends, as if seeking in their countenances an interpretation of all these gestures; but their countenances indicated nothing beyond a good appetite. The landlord approached to receive his orders, and Renzo made him accompany him into an adjoining room, and ordered some supper.

"Who are those strangers?" asked he, in a low voice, when his host returned with a coarse table-cloth under his arm, and a bottle in his hand.

"I don't know them," replied the host, spreading the table-cloth.

"What! none of them?"

"You know," replied he, again smoothing the cloth on the table with both his hands, "that the first rule of our business is not to pry into other people's affairs; so that even our women are not inquisitive. It would be hard work, with the multitude of folk that come and go; always like a harbour—when the times are good, I mean; but let us cheer up now, for there may come better days. All we care for is whether our customers are honest fellows; who they are or are not, beyond that, is nothing to us. But, come! I will bring you a dish of hash, the like of which you've never tasted."

"How do you know . . . ?" Renzo was beginning; but the landlord, already on his way to the kitchen, paid no attention to his inquiry. Here, while he was taking up the stewing-pan in which was the above-mentioned

hash, the bravo who had eyed our youth so closely accosted the host, and said, in an under tone, "Who are those good men?"

"Worthy people of the village," replied he, pouring the hash into a dish.

"Very well; but what are they called? Who are they?" insisted he, in a sharp tone.

"One is called Renzo," replied the host, speaking in a low voice; "a worthy youth reckoned—a silk weaver, who understands his business well. The other is a peasant of the name of Tonio, a good jovial comrade; pity he has so little; he'd spend it all here. The third is a simpleton, who eats willingly whatever is set before him. By your leave."

With these words and a slight bow, he passed between the stove and the interrogator, and carried the dish into the next room. "How do you know," resumed Renzo, when he saw him re-appear, "that they are honest men, if you don't know them?"

"By their actions, my good fellow—men are known by their actions. Those who drink wine without criticising it; who show the face of the King upon the counter without prating; who don't quarrel with other customers; and if they owe a blow to any one, go outside and away from the inn to give it, so that the poor landlord isn't brought into the scrape:—these are honest men. However, if one could know everybody to be honest, as we four know one another, it would be better. But why are you so inquisitive on these matters, when you are a bridegroom, and ought to have other things in your head? and with this hash before you, enough to make the dead rise again?" So saying, he returned to the kitchen.

Our author, remarking upon the different manner in which the landlord satisfied these various inquiries,

says he was one who in words made great professions of friendship for honest men in general, but who in practice paid much more attention to those who had the character and appearance of knaves. He was, as every one must perceive, a man of singular character.

The supper was not very blithesome. The two invited guests would have deliberately enjoyed the unusual gratification, but the inviter, pre-occupied by—the reader knows what—anxious, and uneasy at the strange behaviour of these incognitos, was impatient for the time of departure. He spoke in an under tone, out of respect to the strangers, and in broken and hurried words.

“What a fine thing,” suddenly exclaimed Gervase, “that Renzo wants to marry, and is obliged . . . !” Renzo gave him a savage look, and Tonio exclaimed: “Hold your tongue, simpleton!” accompanying the epithet with a knock of his elbow. The conversation flagged till the end of the meal. Renzo, observing the strictest sobriety, managed to help his guests with so much discretion as to inspire them with sufficient boldness, without making them giddy and bewildered. Supper being over, and the bill having been paid by the one who had done the least execution, they had again to pass under the scrutinizing eyes of the three bravoës, who gazed earnestly at Renzo, as they had done on his entrance. When he had proceeded a few paces from the inn, he looked round, and saw that he was followed by the two bravoës whom he had left sitting in the kitchen; so he stood still with his companions, as much as to say, Let us see what these fellows want with me. On perceiving, however, that they were observed, they also stopped short, and speaking to each other in a suppressed voice, turned back again. Had Renzo been near

enough to have heard their words, the following would have struck him as very strange: "It will be a fine thing, however, without counting the drinking-money," said one of the villains, "if we can relate, on our return to the palace, that we made them lay down their arms in a hurry;—by ourselves, too, without Signor Griso here to give orders!"

"And spoil the principal business!" replied the other. "See, they've discovered something; they are stopping to look at us. Oh, I wish it was later! Let us turn back, or they'll surely suspect us! Don't you see people are coming in every direction? Let us wait till they've all gone to bed."

There was, in fact, that stirring—that confused buzz—which is usually heard in a village on the approach of evening, and which shortly afterwards gives place to the solemn stillness of night. Women arrived from the fields, carrying their infants on their backs, and holding by the hand the elder children, whom they were hearing repeat their evening prayers; while the men bore on their shoulders their spades, and different implements of husbandry. On the opening of the cottage doors, a bright gleam of light sparkled from the fires, that were kindled to prepare their humble evening meal. In the street might be heard salutations exchanged, together with brief and sad remarks on the scarcity of the harvest, and the poverty of the times; while, above all, resounded the measured and sonorous tolls of the bell, which announced the close of day. When Renzo saw that his two indiscreet followers had retired, he continued his way amid the increasing darkness, occasionally, in a low tone, refreshing the memories of one or other of the brothers on some point of their duties they might be likely to forget. When he arrived at Lucia's cottage, the night had quite closed in.

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing,”

says a foreign writer, who was not wanting in discernment,

“ And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

Lucia had suffered for several hours the horrors of such a dream ; and Agnese—Agnese herself, the author of the design, was buried in thought, and could scarcely find words to encourage her daughter. But, at the moment of awaking—at the moment when one is called upon to begin the dreaded undertaking, the mind is instantly transformed. A new terror and a new courage succeed those which before struggled within ; the enterprise presents itself to the mind like a fresh apparition ; that which, at first sight, was most dreaded, seems sometimes rendered easy in a moment ; and, on the other hand, an obstacle which, at first, was scarcely noticed, becomes formidable ; the imagination shrinks back alarmed, the limbs refuse to fulfil their office, and the heart revokes the promises that were made with the greatest confidence. At Renzo's smothered knock, Lucia was seized with such terror, that, at the moment, she resolved to suffer anything, to be separated from him for ever, rather than execute the resolutions she had made ; but when he had stood before her, and had said, “ Here I am, let us go”—when all were ready to accompany him without hesitation, as a fixed and irrevocable thing, Lucia had neither time nor heart to interpose difficulties ; and, almost dragged along, she tremblingly took one arm of her mother, and one of her betrothed, and set off with the venturesome party.

Very softly, in the dark, and with slow steps, they passed the threshold, and took the road that led out of the village. The shortest way would have been to have gone through it, to reach Don Abbondio's house, at

the other end; but they chose the longer course, as being the most retired. After passing along little narrow roads that ran between gardens and fields, they arrived near the house, and here they divided. The two lovers remained hidden behind a corner of the building; Agnese was with them, but stood a little forwarder, that she might be able to run in time to meet Perpetua, and take possession of her. Tonio, with his blockhead of a brother, Gervase, who knew how to do nothing by himself, and without whom nothing could be done, hastened boldly forward, and knocked at the door.

"Who's there, at such an hour?" cried a voice from a window, that was thrown open at the moment: it was the voice of Perpetua. "There's nobody ill, that I know of. But, perhaps, some accident has happened?"

"It is I," replied Tonio, "with my brother; we want to speak to the Signor Curate."

"Is this an hour for Christians?" replied Perpetua, sharply. "You've no consideration. Come again to-morrow."

"Listen; I'll come again, or not, just as you like. I've scraped together, nobody knows how much money, and came to settle that little debt you know of. Here, I had five-and-twenty fine new *berlinghe*; but if one cannot pay, never mind; I know well enough how to spend these, and I'll come again, when I've got together some more."

"Wait, wait! I'll go, and be back in a moment. But why come at such an hour?"

"If you can change the hour, I've no objection; as for me, here I am; and if you don't want me, I'll go."

"No, no; wait a moment; I'll be back with the answer directly."

So saying, she shut the window again. At this instant, Agnese left the lovers, and saying, in a low voice, to Lucia, "Courage! it is but a moment; it's only like

drawing a tooth," joined the two brothers at the door, and began gossiping with Tonio, so that, when Perpetua should return and see her, she might think she was just passing by, and that Tonio had detained her for a moment.

GAME OF MORA, p. 133.



This is a game between two, played by one of them suddenly extending any number of fingers he may choose, and calling at the same moment for some number under eleven, which the opponent must make up at once, by producing such a number of fingers, that the number called for may be summed up exactly on the extended fingers of the four hands. If he succeed in making up the right number, he wins; if otherwise, the speaker. The bystanders keep count. This is a very exciting, lively game, and a great favourite among the Roman peasantry.



CHAPTER VIII.

CARNEADES! who was he?—thought Don Abbondio to himself, as he sat in his arm-chair, in a room up-stairs, with a small volume lying open before him, just as Perpetua entered to bring him the message.—Carneades! I seem to have heard or read this name; it must be some man of learning—some great scholar of antiquity; it is just like one of their names; but whoever was he?—So far was the poor man from foreseeing the storm that was gathering over his head!

The reader must know that Don Abbondio was very fond of reading a little every day; and a neighbouring Curate, who possessed something of a library, lent him one book after another, always taking the first that came to hand. The work with which Don Abbondio

was now engaged (being already convalescent, after his fever and fears, and even more advanced in his recovery from the fever than he wished should be believed,) was a panegyric in honour of San Carlo, which had been delivered with much earnestness, and listened to with great admiration, in the Cathedral of Milan, two years before. The saint had been compared, on account of his love of study, to Archimedes; and so far Don Abbondio had met with no stumbling-block; because Archimedes has executed such great works, and has rendered his name so famous, that it required no very vast fund of erudition to know something about *him*. But after Archimedes, the orator also compares his saint to Carneades, and here the reader met with a check. At this point, Perpetua announced the visit of Tonio.

“At this hour!” exclaimed Don Abbondio, also, naturally enough.

“What would you have, sir? They have no consideration, indeed; but if you don’t take him when you can get him”

“If I don’t take him now, who knows when I can? Let him come in Hey! hey!—Perpetua, are you quite sure it is Tonio?”

“Diavolo!” replied Perpetua; and going down stairs, she opened the door, and said, “Where are you?” Tonio advanced, and, at the same moment, Agnese also showed herself, and saluted Perpetua by name.

“Good evening, Agnese,” said Perpetua; “where are you coming from at this hour?”

“I am coming from” mentioning a neighbouring village. “And if you knew” continued she; “I’ve been kept late just for your sake.”

“What for?” asked Perpetua; and turning to the two brothers, “Go in,” said she, “and I’ll follow.”

“Because,” replied Agnese, “a gossiping woman,

who knows nothing about the matter would you believe it? persists in saying that you were not married to Beppo Suolaveehia, nor to Anselmo Lunghigna, because they wouldn't have you! I maintained that you had refused both one and the other”

“To be sure. Oh, what a false-tongued woman! Who is she?”

“Don't ask me; I don't want to make mischief.”

“You shall tell me; you must tell me. I say she's a false body.”

“Well, well but you cannot think how vexed I was that I didn't know the whole history, that I might have put her down.”

“It is an abominable falsehood,” said Perpetua—“a most infamous falsehood! As to Beppo, everybody knows, and might have seen Hey! Tonio; just close the door, and go up stairs till I come.”

Tonio assented from within, and Perpetua continued her eager relation. In front of Don Abbondio's door, a narrow street ran between two cottages, but only continued straight the length of the buildings, and then turned into the fields. Agnese went forward along this street, as if she would go a little aside to speak more freely, and Perpetua followed. When they had turned the corner, and reached a spot whence they could no longer see what happened before Don Abbondio's house, Agnese coughed loudly. This was the signal; Renzo heard it, and re-animating Lucia by pressing her arm, they turned the corner together on tiptoe, crept very softly close along the wall, reached the door, and gently pushed it open; quiet, and stooping low, they were quickly in the passage; and here the two brothers were waiting for them. Renzo very gently let down the latch of the door, and they all four ascended the stairs, making scarcely noise enough for two. On reaching the landing, the two brothers advanced towards the door of the room

at the side of the staircase, and the lovers stood close against the wall.

“*Deo gratias*,” said Tonio, in an explanatory tone.

“Eh, Tonio! is it you? Come in!” replied the voice within.

Tonio opened the door, scarcely wide enough to admit himself and his brother one at a time. The ray of light that suddenly shone through the opening, and crossed the dark floor of the landing, made Lucia tremble, as if she were discovered. When the brothers had entered, Tonio closed the door inside; the lovers stood motionless in the dark, their ears intently on the alert, and holding their breath; the loudest noise was the beating of poor Lucia’s heart.

Don Abbondio was seated, as we have said, in an old arm-chair, enveloped in an antiquated dressing-gown, and his head buried in a shabby cap, the shape of a tiara, which, by the faint light of a small lamp, formed a sort of cornice all round his face. Two thick locks, which escaped from beneath his head-dress, two thick eye-brows, two thick mustachios, and a thick tuft on the chin, all of them grey, and scattered over his dark and wrinkled visage, might be compared to bushes covered with snow, projecting from the face of a cliff, as seen by moonlight.

“Aha!” was his salutation, as he took off his spectacles, and laid them on his book.

“The Signor Curate will say I am come very late,” said Tonio, with a low bow, which Gervase awkwardly imitated.

“Certainly, it is late—late every way. Don’t you know I am ill?”

“I’m very sorry for it.”

“You must have heard I was ill, and didn’t know when I should be able to see anybody. . . . But why have you brought this—this boy with you?”

"For company, Signor Curate."

"Very well; let us see."

"Here are twenty-five new *berlinghe*, with the figure of Saint Ambrose on horseback," said Tonio, drawing a little parcel out of his pocket.

"Let us see," said Don Abbondio; and he took the parcel, put on his spectacles again, opened it, took out the *berlinghe*, turned them over and over, counted them, and found them irreprehensible.

"Now Signor Curate, you will give me Tecla's necklace."

"You are right," replied Don Abbondio; and going to a cupboard, he took out a key, looking round as if to see that all prying spectators were at a proper distance, opened one of the doors, and filling up the aperture with his person, introduced his head to see, and his arm to reach, the pledge; then drawing it out, he shut the cupboard, unwrapped the paper, and saying, "Is that right?" folded it up again, and handed it to Tonio.

"Now," said Tonio, "will you please to put it in black and white?"

"Not satisfied yet!" said Don Abbondio. "I declare they know everything. Eh! how suspicious the world has become! Don't you trust me?"

"What! Signor Curate! Don't I trust you? You do me wrong. But as my name is in your black books, on the debtor's side . . . then, since you have had the trouble of writing once, so . . . from life to death . . ."

"Well, well," interrupted Don Abbondio; and muttering between his teeth, he drew out one of the table-drawers, took thence pen, ink, and paper, and began to write, repeating the words aloud, as they proceeded from his pen. In the meantime, Tonio, and at his side, Gervase, placed themselves standing before the table in such a manner as to conceal the door from the view of the writer, and began to shuffle their feet about on

the floor, as if in mere idleness, but, in reality, as a signal to those without to enter, and, at the same time, to drown the noise of their footsteps. Don Abbondio, intent upon his writing, noticed nothing else. At the noise of their feet, Renzo took Lucia's arm, pressing it in an encouraging manner, and went forward, almost dragging her along; for she trembled to such a degree, that, without his help, she must have sunk to the ground. Entering very softly, on tiptoe, and holding their breath, they placed themselves behind the two brothers. In the meantime, Don Abbondio, having finished writing, read over the paper attentively, without raising his eyes; he then folded it up, saying, "Are you content now?" and taking off his spectacles with one hand, handed the paper to Tonio with the other, and looked up. Tonio, extending his right hand to receive it, retired on one side, and Gervase, at a sign from him, on the other; and behold! as at the shifting of a scene, Renzo and Lucia stood between them. Don Abbondio saw indistinctly—saw clearly—was terrified, astonished, enraged, buried in thought, came to a resolution; and all this, while Renzo uttered the words; "Signor Curate, in the presence of these witnesses, this is my wife." Before, however, Lucia's lips could form the reply, Don Abbondio dropped the receipt, seized the lamp with his left hand, and raised it in the air, caught hold of the cloth with his right, and dragged it furiously off the table, bringing to the ground in its fall, book, paper, inkstand, and sandbox; and, springing between the chair and the table, advanced towards Lucia. The poor girl, with her sweet gentle voice, trembling violently, had scarcely uttered the words, "And this . . ." when Don Abbondio threw the cloth rudely over her head and face, to prevent her pronouncing the entire formula. Then, letting the light fall from his other hand, he employed both to wrap the cloth round her

face, till she was well nigh smothered, shouting in the meanwhile, at the stretch of his voice, like a wounded bull; "Perpetua! Perpetua!—treachery—help!" The light, just glimmering on the ground, threw a dim and flickering ray upon Lucia, who, in utter consternation, made no attempt to disengage herself, and might be compared to a statue sculptured in chalk, over which the artificer had thrown a wet cloth. When the light died away, Don Abbondio quitted the poor girl, and went groping about to find the door that opened into an inner room; and having reached it, he entered and shut himself in, unceasingly exclaiming, "Perpetua! treachery, help! Out of the house! out of the house!"

In the other room all was confusion: Renzo, seeking to lay hold of the Curate, and feeling with his hands, as if playing at blindman's-buff, had reached the door, and kicking against it, was crying, "Open, open; don't make such a noise!" Lucia, calling to Renzo, in a feeble voice, said, beseechingly, "Let us go, let us go, for God's sake." Tonio was crawling on his knees, and feeling with his hands on the ground to recover his lost receipt. The terrified Gervase was crying and jumping about, and seeking for the door of the stairs, so as to make his escape in safety.

In the midst of this uproar, we cannot but stop a moment to make a reflection. Renzo, who was causing disturbance at night in another person's house, who had effected an entrance by stealth, and who had blockaded the master himself in one of his own rooms, has all the appearance of an oppressor; while in fact he was the oppressed. Don Abbondio, taken by surprise, terrified and put to flight, while peaceably engaged in his own affairs, appears the victim; when in reality it was he who did the wrong. Thus frequently goes the world.... or rather, we should say, thus it went in the seventeenth century.

The besieged, finding that the enemy gave no signs of abandoning the enterprise, opened a window that looked into the churchyard, and shouted out: "Help! help!" There was a most lovely moon; the shadow of the church, and, a little beyond, the long, sharp shadow of the bell-tower, lay dark, still, and well-defined, on the bright grassy level of the sacred enclosure: all objects were visible, almost as by day. But look which way you would, there appeared no sign of living person. Adjoining the lateral wall of the church, on the side next the Parsonage, was a small dwelling where the sexton slept. Aroused by this unusual cry, he sprang up in his bed, jumped out in great haste, threw open the sash of his little window, put his head out with his eyelids glued together all the while, and cried out: "What's the matter?"

"Run, Ambrogio! help! people in the house!" answered Don Abbondio. "Coming directly," replied he, as he drew in his head and shut the window; and although half-asleep and more than half terrified, an expedient quickly occurred to him that would bring more aid than had been asked, without dragging *him* into the affray, whatever it might be. Seizing his breeches that lay upon the bed, he tucked them under his arm like a gala hat, and bounding down stairs by a little wooden ladder, ran to the belfry, caught hold of the rope that was attached to the larger of the two bells, and pulled vigorously.

Ton, ton, ton, ton; the peasant sprang up in his bed; the boy stretched in the hay-loft listened eagerly, and leapt upon his feet. "What's the matter? what's the matter? The bell's ringing! Fire? Thieves? Banditti?" Many of the women advised—begged their husbands not to stir—to let others run; some got up and went to the window; those who were cowards, as if yielding to entreaty, quietly slipped under the bed-

clothes again; while the more inquisitive and courageous sprang up and armed themselves with pitch-forks and pistols, to run to the uproar; others waited to see the end.

But before these were all ready, and even before they were well awake, the noise had reached the ears, and arrested the attention of some others not very far distant, who were both dressed and on their feet; the braves in one place; Agnese and Perpetua in another. We will first briefly relate the movements of the braves since we left them;—some in the old building, and some at the inn.

The three at the inn, as soon as they saw all the doors shut and the street deserted, went out, pretending to be going some distance; but they only quietly took a short turn in the village to be assured that all had retired to rest; and in fact, they met not one living creature, nor heard the least noise. They also passed, still more softly, before Lucia's little cottage, which was the quietest of all, since there was no one within. They then went direct to the old house, and reported their observations to Signor Griso. Hastily putting on a slouched hat, with a pilgrim's dress of sackcloth, scattered over with cockle-shells, and taking in his hand a pilgrim's staff, he said: "Now let us act like good braves; quiet, and attentive to orders." So saying, he moved forward, followed by the rest, and in a few moments reached the cottage by the opposite way to the one our little party had taken when setting out on their expedition. Griso ordered his followers to remain a few paces behind, while he went forward alone to explore; and finding all outside deserted and still, he beckoned to two of them to advance, ordered them quietly to scale the wall that surrounded the court-yard, and when they had descended, to conceal themselves in a corner behind a thick fig-tree that he had noticed in

the morning. This done, he knocked gently at the door, with the intention of saying that he was a pilgrim who had lost his way, and begged a lodging for the night. No one replied; he knocked a little more loudly; not a whisper. He therefore called a third bravo, and made him descend into the yard as the other two had done, with orders to unfasten the bolt inside very carefully, so that he might have free ingress and egress. All was executed with the greatest caution and the most prosperous success. He then went to call the rest, and bidding them enter with him, sent them to hide in the corner with the others, closed the door again very softly, placed two sentinels inside, and went up to the door of the house. Here also he knocked—waited; and long enough he might wait. He then as gently as possible opened this door; nobody within said: Who's there; no one was to be heard. Nothing could be better. Forward then; "Come on," cried he to those behind the fig-tree, and he entered with them into that very room where in the morning he had so basely obtained the piece of bread. Drawing from his pocket a piece of steel, a flint, some tinder and a few matches, he lit a small lantern he had provided, and stepped into the next room to assure himself that all was quiet: no one was there. He returned, went to the foot of the stairs, looked up, listened; all was solitude and silence. Leaving two more sentinels in the lower room, he bid Grignapoco follow him, a bravo from the district of Bergamo, whose office it was to threaten, appease, and command; to be, in short, the spokesman, so that his dialect might give Agnese the idea that the expedition came from his neighbourhood. With this companion at his side, and the rest behind him, Griso very slowly ascended the stairs, cursing in his heart every step that unluckily creaked, every tread of these villains that made the least noise. At last he reaches the top. Here

is the danger. He gently pushes the door that leads into the first room; it yields to his touch; he opens it a little and looks in; all is dark; he listens attentively, perchance he may hear a snoring, a breath, a stirring within; nothing. Forward then; he puts the lantern before his face, so as to see without being seen, he opens the door wide; perceives a bed; looks upon it; the bed is made and smooth, with the clothes turned down and arranged upon the pillow. He shrugs his shoulders, turns to his companions, beckons to them that he is going to look in the other room, and that they must keep quiet where they were; he goes forward, uses the same precautions, meets with the same success. "Whatever can this mean?" exclaimed he boldly: "some traitorous dog must have been acting as spy." They then began to look about them with less caution, and to pry into every corner, turning the house upside down.

While the party upstairs were thus engaged, the two who were on guard at the street-door heard hasty and repeated footsteps approaching along the road that led into the village, and imagining that whoever it was, he would pass by, they kept quiet, their ears, however, attentively on the watch. But behold! the footsteps stopped exactly at the door. It was Menico arriving in great haste, sent by Father Cristoforo to bid the two women, for Heaven's sake, to make their escape as quickly as possible from their cottage, and take refuge in the convent, because . . . the 'because' the reader knows. He took hold of the handle of the latch, and felt it shake in his hand, unfastened and broken open. What is this? thought he, as he pushed open the door in some alarm; and putting one foot inside with considerable suspicion, he felt himself seized in a moment by both arms, and heard two smothered voices, on his right and left, saying to him, in a threatening tone:

“Hush! hold your tongue, or you die.” On the contrary, however, he uttered a shrill cry, upon which one of them struck him a great blow on the mouth, and the other took hold of a large knife to terrify him. The poor child trembled like a leaf, and did not attempt a second cry; but all at once, in his stead, and with a far different tone, burst forth the first sound of the bell before described, and immediately after many thundering peals in quick succession. “If the cap fits, put it on,” says a Milanese proverb: each of the villains seemed to hear in these peals his name, surname, and nickname; they let go of Menico’s arms, hastily dropped their own, gazed at each other’s faces in mute astonishment, and then ran into the house where was the bulk of their companions. Menico took to his legs, and fled, by way of the fields, towards the belfry, where he felt sure there would be some people assembled. On the other ruffians, who were rummaging the house from top to bottom, the terrible bell made the same impression; confused and alarmed, they ran against one another, in attempting, each one for himself, to find the shortest way of reaching the street-door. Though men of approved courage, and accustomed never to turn their backs on known peril, they could not stand against an indefinite danger, which had not been viewed at a little distance before coming upon them. It required all the authority of Griso to keep them together, so that it might be a retreat and not a flight. Just as a dog urging a drove of pigs, runs here and there after those that break the ranks, seizes one by the ears, and drags him into the herd, propels another with his nose, barks at a third that leaves the line at the same moment, so the pilgrim laid hold of one of his troop just passing the threshold, and drew him back, detained with his staff others who had almost reached it, called after some who were flying they knew not whither, and finally

succeeded in assembling them all in the middle of the court-yard. "Halt! halt! pistols in hand, daggers in readiness, all together, and then we'll begone. We must march in order. What care we for the bells ringing, if we are all together, you cowards? But if we let them catch us one by one, even the villagers will give us it. For shame! Fall behind, and keep together." After this brief harangue, he placed himself in the front, and led the way out. The cottage, as we have said, was at the extremity of the village: Griso took the road that led out of it, and the rest followed him in good order.

We will let them go, and return a step or two to find Agnese and Perpetua, whom we had just conducted round the corner of a certain road. Agnese had endeavoured to allure her companion as far away from Don Abbondio's house as possible, and up to a certain point had succeeded very well. But all on a sudden the servant remembered that she had left the door open, and she wanted to go back. There was nothing to be said: Agnese, to avoid exciting any suspicion in her mind, was obliged to turn and walk with her, trying however to detain her whenever she saw her very eager in relating the issue of such and such courtships. She pretended to be paying very great attention, and every now and then, by way of showing that she was listening, or to animate the flagging conversation, would say: "Certainly: now I understand: that was capital: that is plain: and then? and he? and you?" while all the time she was keeping up a very different discourse in her own mind.—"I wonder if they are out by this time? or will they still be in the house? What geese we all were not to arrange any signal to let me know when it was over! It was really very stupid! But it can't be helped: and the best thing I can do now is to keep her loitering here as long as I can: let the worst come to the worst, it will only be a little time lost."—Thus,

with sundry pauses and various deviations from the straight path, they were brought back again to within a very short distance from Don Abbondio's house, which, however, could not be seen on account of the corner intercepting the view, and Perpetua, finding herself at an important part of her narration, had suffered herself to be detained without resistance, and even without being aware of it, when they suddenly heard, echoing through the vacant extent of the atmosphere, and the dead silence of night, the loud and disordered cry of Don Abbondio: "Help! help!"

"Mercy! what has happened?" cried Perpetua, beginning to run.

"What is it? what is it?" said Agnese, holding her back by the gown.

"Mercy! didn't you hear?" replied she, struggling.

"What is it? what is it?" repeated Agnese, seizing her by the arm.

"Wretch of a woman!" exclaimed Perpetua, pushing her away to free herself and to run. At this moment, more distant, more shrill, more instantaneous, was heard the scream of Menico.

"Mercy!" cried Agnese also: and they ran off together. They had scarcely, however, gone a step, when the bell sounded one stroke, then two, three, and a succession of peals, such as would have stimulated them to run had there been no other inducement. Perpetua arrived first by two steps: while she raised her hand to the door to open it, behold! it was opened from within, and on the threshold stood, Tonio, Gervase, Renzo, and Lucia, who having found the stairs, had come down more rapidly than they went up; and at the sound of that terrible bell, were making their escape in haste to reach a place of safety.

"What's the matter? what's the matter?" demanded the panting Perpetua of the brothers; but they only

replied with a violent push, and passed on. "And you! How! what are you doing here?" said she to the other couple on recognising them. But they too made their escape without answering her. Without, therefore, asking any more questions, and directing her steps where she was most wanted, she rushed impetuously into the passage, and went groping about as quickly as she could to find the stairs.

The betrothed, still only betrothed, now fell in with Agnese, who arrived weary and out of breath. "Ah! here you are!" said she, scarcely able to speak. "How has it gone?" What is the bell ringing for? I thought I heard"

"Home! home!" cried Renzo, "before anybody comes." And they moved forward; but at this moment Menico arrived, running as fast as his legs could carry him; and recognising them, he threw himself in their way, and still all in a tremble and scarcely able to draw his breath, exclaimed: "Where are you going? back, back! This way, to the convent."

"Are you?" began Agnese.

"What is it?" asked Renzo. Lucia stood by, trembling and silent, in utter dismay.

"There are devils in your house," replied Menico, panting. "I saw them myself: they wanted to murder me: Father Cristoforo said so; and even you, Renzo, he said, were to come quickly:—and besides, I saw them myself:—it's providential you are all here:—I will tell you the rest when we get out of the village."

Renzo, who had more of his senses about him than the rest, remembered that they had better make their escape one way or another before the crowds assembled; and that the best plan would be to do as Menico advised, nay, commanded with the authority of one in terror. When once on their way, and out of the tumult and danger, he could ask a clearer explanation from the

boy. "Lead the way," said he to Menico; and addressing the women, said: "Let us go with him." They therefore quickly turned their steps towards the church, crossed the churchyard, where, by the favour of Heaven, there was not yet a living creature, entered a little street that ran between the church and Don Abbondio's house, turned into the first alley they came to, and then took the way of the fields.

They had not perhaps gone fifty yards, when the crowd began to collect in the churchyard, and rapidly increased every moment. They looked inquiringly in each other's faces; every one had a question to ask, but no one could return an answer. Those who arrived first, ran to the church-door: it was locked. They then ran to the belfry outside; and one of them, putting his mouth to a very small window, a sort of loop-hole, cried, "What ever is the matter?" As soon as Ambrogio recognised a known voice, he let go of the bell-rope, and being assured by the buzz that many people had assembled, replied: "I'll open the door." Hastily slipping on the apparel he had carried under his arm, he went inside the church, and opened the door.

"What is all this hubbub?—What is it?—Where is it?—Who is it?"

"Why, who is it?" said Ambrogio, laying one hand on the door-post, and with the other holding up the habiliment he had put on in such haste: "What! don't you know? People in the Signor Curate's house. Up, boys: help!" Hearing this, they all turned to the house, looked up, approached it in a body, looked up again, listened: all was quiet. Some ran to the street-door; it was shut and bolted; they glanced upwards: not a window was open; not a whisper was to be heard.

"Who is within?—Ho! Hey!—Signor Curate!—Signor Curate!"

Don Abbondio, who, scarcely aware of the flight of the invaders, had retired from the window, and closed it, and who at this moment was reproaching Perpetua in a low voice for having left him alone in this confusion, was obliged, when he heard himself called upon by the voice of the assembled people, to show himself again at the window; and when he saw the crowds that had come to his aid, he sorely repented having called them.

“What has happened?—What have they done to you?—Who are they?—Where are they?” burst forth from fifty voices at once.

“There’s nobody here now; thank you: go home again.”

“But who has been here?—Where are they gone?—What has happened?”

“Bad people, people who go about by night; but they’re gone: go home again: there is no longer anything: another time, my children: I thank you for your kindness to me.” So saying, he drew back, and shut the window. Some of the crowd began to grumble, some to joke, others to curse; some shrugged their shoulders and took their departure: when one arrived, endeavouring, but scarcely able to speak from want of breath. It was the person who lived in the house opposite Agnese’s cottage, who having gone to the window at the noise, had seen in the court-yard the assembly of braves, when Griso was striving to re-unite his scattered troops. On recovering his breath, he cried: “What are you doing here, my good fellows? the devil isn’t here; he’s down at the end of the village, at Agnese Mondella’s house; armed men are within, who seem to be murdering a pilgrim; who knows what the devil is doing!”

“What?—what?—what?” and a tumultuous consultation began. “We must go.—We must see.—How

many are there?—How many are we?—Who are we?—The constable! the constable!”

“I’m here,” replied the constable from the middle of the crowd: “I’m here; but you must help me, you must obey. Quick: where is the sexton? To the bell, to the bell. Quick! Somebody to run to Lecco for help: all of you come here”

Some ran, some slipped between their fellows and made their escape; and the tumult was at its greatest height, when another runner arrived who had seen Griso and his party going off in such haste, and cried in his turn: “Run, my good fellows: thieves or banditti, who are carrying off a pilgrim: they are already out of the village. On! after them!” At this information, they moved off in a body in great confusion towards the fields, without waiting their general’s orders, and as the crowd proceeded, many of the vanguard slackened their pace, to let the others advance, and retired into the body of the battalion, those in the rear pushing eagerly forward, until at last the disorderly multitude reached their place of destination. Traces of the recent invasion were manifest: the door opened, the locks torn off; but the invaders had disappeared. The crowd entered the court-yard, and went to the room door; this, too, was burst open: they called: “Agnese! Lucia! the pilgrim! Where is the pilgrim? Stefano must have been dreaming about the pilgrim.—No, no: Carlandrea saw him also. Ho! hey! pilgrim!—Agnese! Lucia!” No one replied. “They’ve run away with them! They’ve run away with them!” There were then some who raised their voices and proposed to follow the robbers; said it was a heinous crime, and that it would be a disgrace to the village, if every villain could come and carry off women with impunity, as a kite carries off chickens from a deserted barn-floor. Then rose a fresh and more tumultuous consultation; but somebody, (and it

was never certainly known who,) called out in the crowd that Agnese and Lucia were in safety in a house. The rumour spread rapidly; it gained belief, and no one spoke again of giving chase to the fugitives; the multitude dispersed, and every one went to his own house. There was a general whispering, a noise, all over the village, a knocking and opening of doors, an appearing and disappearing of lights, a questioning of women from the windows, an answering from the streets. When all outside was deserted and quiet, the conversations continued in the houses, and ended at last in slumber, only to be renewed on the morrow. However no other events took place, excepting that on the morning of that morrow, the constable was standing in his field, with his chin resting on his hands, his hands on the handle of the spade, which was half stuck into the ground, and one foot on the iron rest affixed to the handle; speculating in his mind, as he thus stood, on the mysteries of the past night, on what would reasonably be expected of him, and on what course it would be best for him to pursue, he saw two men approaching him with very fierce looks, wearing long hair, like the first race of French kings, and otherwise bearing a strong resemblance to the two who, five days before, had confronted Don Abbondio, if, indeed, they were not the same men. These, with still less ceremony than had been used towards the Curate, intimated to the constable that he must take right good care not to make a deposition to the *Podestà* of what had happened, not to tell the truth in case he was questioned, not to gossip, and not to encourage gossiping among the villagers, as he valued his life.

Our fugitives walked a little way at a quick pace in silence, one or other occasionally looking back to see if they were followed, all of them wearied by the fatigue of the flight, by the anxiety and suspense they had

endured, by grief at their ill-success, and by confused apprehensions of new and unknown danger. Their terror, too, was increased by the sound of the bell, which still continued to follow them, and seemed to become heavier and more hoarse the further they left it behind them, acquiring every moment something more mournful and ominous in its tone. At last the ringing ceased. Reaching then a deserted field, and not hearing a whisper around, they slackened their pace, and Agnese, taking breath, was the first to break the silence, by asking Renzo how matters had gone, and Menico, what was the demon in their house. Renzo briefly related his melancholy story; and then, all of them turning to the child, he informed them more expressly of the Father's advice, and narrated what he had himself witnessed and the hazards he had run, which too surely confirmed the advice. His auditors, however, understood more of this than did the speaker; they were seized with new horror at the discovery, and for a moment paused in their walk, exchanging mutual looks of fear; then with an unanimous movement they laid their hands, some on the head, others on the shoulders of the boy, as if to caress him, and tacitly to thank him for having been to them a guardian angel; at the same time signifying the compassion they felt for him, and almost apologising for the terror he had endured and the danger he had undergone on their account. "Now go home, that your family may not be anxious about you any longer," said Agnese; and remembering the two promised *parpagliole*, she took out four, and gave them to him, adding: "That will do; pray the Lord that we may meet again soon; and then" Renzo gave him a new *berlinga*, and begged him to say nothing of the message he had brought from the Father: Lucia again caressed him, bade him farewell with a sorrowful voice, and the boy, almost overcome, wished them good bye, and turned back.

The melancholy trio continued their walk, the women taking the lead, and Renzo behind to act as guard. Lucia clung closely to her mother's arm, kindly and dexterously avoiding the proffered assistance of the youth at the difficult passes of this unfrequented path; feeling ashamed of herself, even in such troubles, for having already been so long and so familiarly alone with him, while expecting in a few moments to be his wife. Now that this vision had been so sorrowfully dispelled, she repented having proceeded thus far; and, amidst so many causes of fear, she feared even for her modesty,—not such modesty as arises from the sad knowledge of evil, but for that which is ignorant of its own existence;—like the dread of a child who trembles in the dark, he knows not why.

“And the house?” suddenly exclaimed Agnese. But however important the object might be which extorted this exclamation, no one replied, because no one could do so satisfactorily. They therefore continued their walk in silence, and, in a little while, reached the square before the church of the convent.

Renzo advanced to the door of the church and gently pushed it open. The moon that entered through the aperture, fell upon the pale face and silvery beard of Father Cristoforo, who was standing here, expecting them; and having seen that no one was missing, “God be praised!” said he, beckoning to them to enter. By his side stood another Capuchin, the lay sexton, whom he had persuaded, by prayers and arguments, to keep vigil with him, to leave the door ajar, and to remain there on guard to receive these poor threatened creatures; and it required nothing short of the authority of the Father, and of his fame as a saint, to persuade the layman to so inconvenient, perilous, and irregular a condescension. When they were inside, Father Cristoforo very softly shut the door. Then the sexton could

no longer contain himself, and taking the Father aside, whispered in his ear; "But Father, Father! at night . . . in church . . . with women . . . shut . . . the rule . . . but Father!" And he shook his head, while thus hesitatingly pronouncing these words. Just see! thought Father Cristoforo; if it were a pursued robber, Friar Fazio would make no difficulty in the world; and a poor innocent escaping from the jaws of a wolf. . . . "*Omnia munda mundis*," added he, turning suddenly to Friar Fazio, and forgetting that he did not understand Latin. But this forgetfulness was exactly what produced the right effect. If the Father had begun to dispute and reason, Friar Fazio would not have failed to urge opposing arguments; and no one knows how and when the discussion would have come to an end; but at the sound of these weighty words of a mysterious signification, and so resolutely uttered, it seemed to him that in them must be contained the solution of all his doubts. He acquiesced, saying, "Very well; you know more about it than I do."

"Trust me, then," replied Father Cristoforo; and by the dim light of the lamp burning before the altar, he approached the refugees, who stood waiting in suspense, and said to them, "My children, thank God, who has delivered you from so great a danger! Perhaps at this moment . . ." and here he began to explain more fully what he had hinted by the little messenger, little suspecting that they knew more than he, and supposing that Menico had found them quiet in their own house, before the arrival of the ruffians. Nobody undeceived him, not even Lucia, whose conscience, however, was all the while secretly reproaching her for practising such dissimulation with so good a man; but it was a night of embarrassment and dissimulation.

"After this," continued he, "you must feel, my children, that the village is no longer safe for you. It

is yours, you were born there, and you have done no wrong to any one ; but God wills it so. It is a trial, my children ; bear it with patience and faith, without indulging in rancour, and rest assured there will come a day when you will think yourselves happy that this has occurred. I have thought of a refuge for you, for the present. Soon, I hope, you may be able to return in safety to your own house ; at any rate, God will provide what is best for you ; and I assure you, I will be careful not to prove unworthy of the favour He has bestowed upon me, in choosing me as His minister, in the service of you, His poor, yet loved afflicted ones. You," continued he, turning to the two women, " can



stay at * * *. Here you will be far enough from every danger, and at the same time not far from your own home. There seek out our convent, ask for the guardian, and give him this letter ; he will be to you another Friar Cristoforo. And you, my Renzo, must put yourself in safety from the anger of others, and your own. Carry this letter to Father Bonaventura da Lodi, in our convent of the Porta Orientale, at Milan. He will be a

father to you, will give you directions, and find you work, till you can return and live more peaceably. Go to the shore of the lake, near the mouth of the Bione, a river not far from this monastery. Here you will see a boat waiting; say, 'Boat!' it will be asked you 'For whom?' And you must reply, 'San Francesco.' The boat will receive you, and carry you to the other side, where you will find a cart, that will take you straight to * * * ."

If any one asks how Father Cristoforo had so quickly at his disposal these means of transport by land and water, it will show that he does not know the influence and power of a Capuchin held in reputation as a saint.

It still remained to decide about the care of the houses. The Father received the keys, pledging himself to deliver them to whomsoever Renzo and Agnese should name. The latter, in delivering up hers, heaved a deep sigh, remembering that, at that moment, the house was open, that the devil had been there, and who knew what remained to be taken care of!

"Before you go," said the Father, "let us pray all together that the Lord may be with you in this your journey, and for ever; and, above all, that He may give you strength, and a spirit of love, to enable you to desire whatever He has willed." So saying, he knelt down in the middle of the church, and they all followed his example. After praying a few moments in silence, with a low but distinct voice, he pronounced these words; "We beseech Thee, also, for the unhappy person who has brought us to this state. We should be unworthy of Thy mercy, if we did not, from our hearts, implore it for him; he needs it, O Lord! We, in our sorrow, have this consolation, that we are in the path where Thou hast placed us; we can offer Thee our griefs, and they may become our gain. But he is Thine enemy! Alas, wretched man! he is striving with Thee!

Have mercy on him, O Lord ; touch his heart ; reconcile him to Thyself, and give him all those good things we could desire for ourselves."

Rising then in haste, he said, "Come, my children, you have no time to lose ; God defend you ; His angel go with you ;—farewell !" And while they set off with that emotion which cannot find words, and manifests itself without them, the Father added, in an agitated tone, "My heart tells me we shall meet again soon."

Certainly, the heart ; to those who listen to it, has always something to say on what will happen ; but what did his heart know ? Very little, truly, of what had already happened.

Without waiting a reply, Father Cristoforo retired with hasty steps ; the travellers took their departure ; and Father Fazio shut the door after them, bidding them farewell with even his voice a little faltering.

The trio slowly made their way to the shore they had been directed to ; there they espied the boat, and exchanging the pass-word, stepped in. The waterman, planting one oar on the land, pushed off ; then took up the other oar, and rowing with both hands, pulled out and made towards the opposite beach. Not a breath of wind was stirring ; the lake lay bright and smooth, and would have appeared motionless but for the tremulous and gentle undulation of the moon-beams, which gleamed upon it from the zenith. No sounds were heard but the muffled and slowly-measured breaking of the surge upon the pebbly shore, the more distant gurgling of the troubled waters dashing among the piles of the bridge, and the even plash of the light skulls, as, rising with a sharp sound of the dripping blade, and quickly plunged again beneath, they cut the azure surface of the lake. The waves, divided by the prow, and re-uniting behind the little bark, traeked out a curling line, which extended itself to the shore. The silent travellers, with

their faces turned backwards, gazed upon the mountains and the country, illumined by the pale light of the moon, and diversified here and there with vast shadows. They could distinguish the villages, the houses, and the little cabins : the palace of Don Rodrigo, with its square tower, rising above the group of huts at the base of the promontory, looked like a savage standing in the dark, and meditating some evil deed, while keeping guard over a company of reclining sleepers. Lucia saw it and shuddered ; then drawing her eye along the declivity till she reached her native village, she fixed her gaze on its extremity, sought for her own cottage, traced out the thick head of the fig-tree which towered above the wall of the court-yard, discovered the window of her own room ; and, being seated in the bottom of the boat, she leaned her elbow on the edge, laid her forehead on her arm, as if she were sleeping, and wept in secret.

Farewell, ye mountains, rising from the waters, and pointing to the heavens ! ye varied summits, familiar to him who has been brought up among you, and impressed upon his mind as clearly as the countenance of his dearest friends ! ye torrents, whose murmur he recognises like the sound of the voices of home ! ye villages, scattered and glistening on the declivity, like flocks of grazing sheep ! farewell ! How mournful is the step of him who, brought up amidst your scenes, is compelled to leave you ! Even in the imagination of one who willingly departs, attracted by the hope of making a fortune elsewhere, the dreams of wealth at this moment lose their charms ; he wonders he could form such a resolution, and would even now turn back, but for the hope of one day returning with a rich abundance. As he advances into the plain, his eye becomes wearied with its uniform extent ; the atmosphere feels heavy and lifeless ; he sadly and listlessly enters the busy cities, where houses crowded upon houses, and streets

intersecting streets, seem to take away his breath ; and, before edifices admired by the stranger, he recalls with restless longing the fields of his own country, and the cottage he had long ago set his heart upon, and which he resolves to purchase when he returns enriched to his own mountains.

But what must he feel who has never sent a passing wish beyond these mountains, who has arranged among them all his designs for the future, and is driven far away by an adverse power ! who, suddenly snatched away from his dearest habits, and thwarted in his dearest hopes, leaves these mountains to go in search of strangers whom he never desired to know, and is unable to look forward to a fixed time of return !

Farewell ! native cottage, where, indulging in unconscious thought, one learnt to distinguish from the noise of common footsteps, the approach of a tread expected with mysterious timidity ! Farewell ! thou cottage, still a stranger, but so often hastily glanced at, not without a blush, in passing, in which the mind took delight to figure to itself the tranquil and lasting home of a wife ! Farewell ! my church, where the heart was so often soothed while chanting the praises of the Lord ; where the preparatory rite of betrothal was performed ; where the secret sighing of the heart was solemnly blessed and love was inspired, and one felt a hallowing influence around ; farewell ! He who imparted to you such gladness is everywhere ; and He never disturbs the joy of his children, but to prepare them for one more certain and durable.

Of such a nature, if not exactly these, were the reflections of Lucia ; and not very dissimilar were those of the two other wanderers, while the little bark rapidly approached the right bank of the Adda.



CHAPTER IX.

THE striking of the boat against the shore aroused Lucia, who, after secretly drying her tears, raised her head as if she were just awaking. Renzo jumped out first, and gave his hand successively to Agnese and Lucia; and then they all turned, and sorrowfully thanked the boatman. "Nothing, nothing; we are placed here to help one another," answered he; and he withdrew his hand, almost with a movement of horror, as if it had been proposed to him to rob, when Renzo tried to slip in one or two of the coins he had about him, and which he had brought in his pocket with the intention of generously requiting Don Abbondio, when he should, though against

his will, have rendered the desired assistance. The cart stood waiting for them; the driver saluted the three expected travellers, and bid them get in; and then, with his voice and a stroke of the whip, he started the animal and set forward.

Our author does not describe this nocturnal journey, and is silent as to the name of the town to which the little company were directing their steps; or rather, he expressly says, he will not give the name. In the course of the story, the reason of all this mystery appears. The adventures of Lueia in this abode involve a dark intrigue of a person belonging to a family still powerful, as it appears, at the time our author wrote. To account for the strange conduct of this person in the particular instance he relates, he has been obliged briefly to recount her early life; and there the family makes the figure which our readers will see. Hence the poor man's great circumspection. And yet (how people sometimes forget themselves!) he himself, without being aware of it, has opened a way of discovering, with certainty, what he had taken such great pains to keep concealed. In one part of the account, which we will omit as not being necessary to the integrity of the story, he happens to say that this place was an ancient and noble borough, which wanted nothing but the name to be a city; he then inadvertently mentions that the river Lambro runs through it: and, again, that it was the seat of an arch-presbyter. With these indications, there is not in all Europe a moderately-learned man, who will not instantly exclaim, "Monza!" We could also propose some very well-founded conjectures on the name of the family; but, although the object of our conjectures has been some time extinct, we consider it better to be silent on this head, not to run the risk of wronging even the dead, and to leave some subject of research for the learned.

Our travellers reached Monza shortly after sun-rise; the driver turned into an inn, and, as if at home in the place and well acquainted with the landlord, ordered a room for the newly-arrived guests, and accompanied them thither. After many acknowledgments, Renzo tried to induce him to receive some reward; but he, like the boatman, had in view another, more distant, but more abundant recompense: he put his hands behind him, and making his escape, went to look after his horse.

After such a night as we have described, and as every one may imagine, the greatest part spent in mournful thoughts, with the constant dread of some unforeseen misfortune, in the melancholy silence of night, in the sharpness of a more than autumnal air, and amid the frequent jolts of the incommodious vehicle, which rudely shook the weary frames of our travellers, they soon felt themselves overpowered with sleep, and availed themselves of a sofa that stood in an adjoining room to take a little repose. They then partook together of a frugal meal, such as the poverty of the times would allow, and scanty in proportion to the contingent wants of an uncertain future, and their own slender appetite. One after another they remembered the banquet which, two days before, they had hoped to enjoy; and each in turn heaved a deep sigh. Renzo would gladly have stayed there, at least for that day, to have seen the two women provided for, and to have given them his services, but the Father had recommended them to send him on his way as quickly as possible. They alleged, therefore, these orders, and a hundred other reasons;—people would gossip—the longer the separation was delayed, the more painful it would be—he could come again soon, to give and learn news;—so that, at last, the youth determined to go. Their plans were then more definitively arranged: Lucia did not attempt to hide her tears; Renzo could

scarcely restrain his; and, warmly pressing Agnese's hand, he said, in an almost-choked voice, "Farewell, till we meet again!" and set off.

The women would have found themselves much at a loss, had it not been for the good driver, who had orders to guide them to the convent, and to give them any direction and assistance they might stand in need of. With this escort, then, they took their way to the convent, which, as every one knows, was a short distance outside the town of Monza. Arrived at the door, their conductor rang the bell, and asked for the guardian, who quickly made his appearance, and received the letter.

"Oh! brother Cristoforo!" said he, recognising the handwriting, the tone of his voice and the expression of his face evidently indicating that he uttered the name of an intimate friend. It might easily be seen, too, that our good friar had in this letter warmly recommended the women, and related their case with much feeling, for the guardian kept making gestures of surprise and indignation, and raising his eyes from the paper, he would fix them upon the women with a certain expression of pity and interest. When he had finished reading it, he stood for a little while thoughtful, and then said to himself, "There is no one but the Signora—if the Signora would take upon herself this charge." He then drew Agnese a few steps aside in the little square before the convent; asked her a few questions, which she answered satisfactorily, and then, turning towards Lucia, addressed them both: "My good women, I will try; and I hope I shall be able to find you a retreat more than secure, more than honourable, until it shall please God to provide for you in some better way. Will you come with me?"

The women reverently bowed assent, and the friar continued: "Come with me to the convent of the Signora. Keep, however, a few steps behind me, because people

delight to speak evil, and no one knows what fine stories they would make out, if they were to see the Father-guardian walking with a beautiful young girl . . . with women, I mean to say."

So saying, he moved forward. Lucia blushed, their guide smiled, and glanced at Agnese, who betrayed, also, a momentary smile; and when the friar had gone a few steps, they followed him at about ten yards distance. The women then asked their guide what they did not dare say to the Father-guardian, who was the Signora.

"The Signora," replied he, "is a nun; but she is not like the other nuns. Not that she is either the Abbess, or the Prioress; for, from what they say, she is one of the youngest there: but she is from Adam's rib, and she is of an ancient and high family in Spain, where some of them now are princes; and therefore they call her the Signora, to show that she is a great lady: and all the country call her by this name, for they say there never was her equal in this monastery before; and even now, down at Milan, her family ranks very high, and is held in great esteem; and in Monza still more so, because her father, though he does not live here, is the first man in the country; so that she can do what she pleases in the convent; and all the country-people bear her a great respect; and if she undertakes a business she is sure to succeed in it; so that, if this good monk before us is fortunate enough to get you into her hands, and she takes you under her protection, I dare venture to say you will be as safe as at the altar."

On reaching the gate of the town, flanked at that time by an ancient ruined tower, and a fragment of a demolished castle, which, perhaps, some few of my readers may still remember to have seen standing, the guardian stopped, and looked behind to see if they were following; he then passed through, and went on to the convent, and when he reached it, stopped again at the doorway,

and waited for the little party. He then begged the guide to come again to the convent, to take back a reply : he promised to do so, and took his leave of the women, who loaded him with thanks and messages to Father Cristoforo. The guardian, bidding them go into the first court of the monastery, ushered them into the apartments of the portress, to whom he recommended them, and went forward alone to make his request. After a few moments, he returned, and, with a joyful manner, told them to come with him ; and his re-appearance was just *à-propos*, for they were beginning to find it difficult to ward off the pressing interrogations of the portress. While traversing the inner court, the Father instructed the women how they must behave to the Signora. “ She is well-disposed towards you,” said he, “ and may be of much service to you. Be humble and respectful, reply with frankness to the questions she may please to put ; and when you are not questioned, leave it to me.” They then passed through a lower room to the parlour of the convent ; and before entering, the guardian, pointing to the door, said to the women in an under tone, “ She is there ;” as if to remind them of the lessons he had been giving. Lucia, who had never before seen a monastery, looked round the room, on entering, for the Signora to whom she was to make obeisance, and perceiving no one, she stood perplexed ; but seeing the Father advance, and Agnese following, she looked in that direction, and observed an almost square aperture, like a half-window, grated with two large thick iron bars, distant from each other about a span, and behind this a nun was standing. Her countenance, which showed her to be about twenty-five years old, gave the impression, at a first glance, of beauty, but of beauty worn, faded, and, one might almost say, spoiled. A black veil, stiffened and stretched quite flat upon her head, fell on each side and stood out

a little way from her face ; under the veil, a very white linen band half covered a forehead of different but not inferior whiteness ; a second band, in folds, down each side of the face, crossed under the chin, encircled the neck, and was spread a little over the breast, to conceal the opening of a black dress. But this forehead was wrinkled every now and then, as if by some painful emotion, accompanied by the rapid movement of two jet-black eyebrows. Sometimes she would fix two very dark eyes on another's face with a piercing look of haughty investigation, and then again would hastily lower them, as if seeking a hiding-place. One moment, an attentive observer would imagine they were soliciting affection, intercourse, pity ; at another, he would gather thence a momentary revelation of ancient and smothered hatred—of some indescribable, fierce disposition ; and when they remained immovably fixed without attention, some might have imagined a proud indifference, while others would have suspected the labouring of some secret thought, the overpowering dominion of an idea familiar to her mind, and more engrossing than surrounding objects. Her pale cheeks were delicately formed, but much altered and shrunk by a gradual extenuation. Her lips, though scarcely suffused with a faint tinge of the rose, stood out in contrast with this paleness, and, like her eyes, their movements were sudden, quick, and full of expression and mystery. The well-formed tallness of her figure disappeared in the habitual stoop of her carriage, or was disfigured by certain quick and irregular starts, which betrayed too resolute an air for a woman, still more for a nun. In her very dress, there was a display of either particularity or negligence, which betokened a nun of singular character ; her head-dress was arranged with a kind of worldly carefulness, and from under the band around her head the end of a curl of glossy black hair appeared

upon her temple, betraying either forgetfulness, or contempt of the rule which required them always to keep the hair closely shaven. It was cut off first at the solemn ceremony of their admission.

These things made no impression on the minds of the two women, inexperienced in distinguishing nun from nun; and the Father-guardian had so frequently seen the Signora before, that he was already accustomed, like many others, to the singularities in manner and dress which she displayed.

She was standing, as we have said, near the grated window, languidly leaning on it with one hand, twining her delicately-white fingers in the interstices, and with her head slightly bent downwards, surveying the advancing party. "Reverend mother and most illustrious Signora," said the guardian, bowing his head, and laying his right hand upon his breast, "this is the poor young girl to whom you have encouraged me to hope you will extend your valuable protection; and this is her mother."

Agnese and Lucia reverently curtsied: the Signora beckoning to them with her hand that she was satisfied, said, turning to the Father, "It is fortunate for me that I have it in my power to serve our good friends the Capuchin Fathers in any matter. But," continued she, "will you tell me a little more particularly the case of this young girl, so that I may know better what I ought to do for her?"

Lucia blushed, and held down her head.

"You must know, reverend mother" began Agnese; but the Guardian silenced her with a glance, and replied, "This young girl, most illustrious lady, has been recommended to me, as I told you, by a brother friar. She has been compelled secretly to leave her country, to avoid great dangers, and wants an asylum for some time where she may live retired, and where no one will dare molest her, even when"

“What dangers?” interrupted the Signora. “Be good enough, Father, not to tell me the case so enigmatically. You know that we nuns like to hear stories minutely.”

“They are dangers,” replied the Guardian, “which scarcely ought to be mentioned ever so delicately in the pure ears of the reverend mother”

“Oh certainly!” replied the Signora, hastily, and slightly colouring. Was it modesty? One who would have observed the momentary expression of vexation which accompanied this blush might have entertained some doubt of it, especially if he had compared it with that which diffused itself from time to time on the cheeks of Lucia.

“It is enough,” resumed the Guardian, “that a powerful nobleman not all the great people of the world use the gifts of God to his glory and for the good of their neighbours, as your illustrious ladyship has done a powerful cavalier, after having for some time persecuted this poor girl with base flatteries, seeing that they were useless, had the heart openly to persecute her by force, so that the poor thing has been obliged to fly from her home.”

“Come near, young girl,” said the Signora to Lucia, beckoning to her with her hand. “I know that the Father-guardian is truth itself; but no one can be better informed in this business than yourself. It rests with you to say whether this cavalier was an odious persecutor.”

As to approaching, Lucia instantly obeyed, but to answer, was another matter. An inquiry on this subject, even when proposed by an equal, would have put her into confusion; but made by the Signora, and with a certain air of malicious doubt, it deprived her of courage to reply. “Signora mother reverend” stammered she, but she seemed to have nothing more to

say. Agnese, therefore, as being certainly the best informed after her, here thought herself authorized to come to her succour. "Most illustrious Signora," said she, "I can bear full testimony that my daughter hated this cavalier, as the devil hates holy water: I should say, he is the devil himself; but you will excuse me if I speak improperly, for we are poor folk, as God made us. The case is this: that my poor girl was betrothed to a youth in her own station, a steady man, and one who fears God; and if the Signor-Curato had been what he ought to be . . . I know I am speaking of a religious man, but Father Cristoforo, a friend here of the Father-guardian, is a religious man as well as he; and that's the man that's full of kindness; and if he were here he could attest . . ."

"You are very ready to speak without being spoken to," interrupted the Signora, with a haughty and angry look, which made her seem almost hideous. "Hold your tongue! I know well enough that parents are always ready with an answer in the name of their children!"

Agnese drew back, mortified, giving Lucia a look which meant to say, See what I get by your not knowing how to speak. The guardian then signified to her, with a glance and a movement of his head, that now was the moment to arouse her courage, and not to leave her poor mother in such a plight.

"Reverend lady," said Lucia, "what my mother has told you is exactly the truth. The youth who paid his addresses to me" (and here she coloured crimson,) "I chose with my own good will. Forgive me, if I speak too boldly, but it is that you may not think ill of my mother. And as to this Signor, (God forgive him!) I would rather die than fall into his hands. And if you do us the kindness to put us in safety, since we are reduced to the necessity of asking a place of refuge,

and of inconveniencing worthy people, (but God's will be done!) be assured, lady, that no one will pray for you more earnestly and heartily than we poor women."

"I believe you," said the Signora, in a softened tone. "But I should like to talk to you alone. Not that I require further information, nor any other motives to attend to the wishes of the Father-guardian," added she, hastily, and turning towards him with studied politeness. "Indeed," continued she, "I have already thought about it; and this is the best plan I can think of for the present. The portress of the convent has, a few days ago, settled her last daughter in the world. These women can occupy the room she has left at liberty, and supply her place in the trifling services she performed in the monastery. In truth . . ." and here she beckoned to the Guardian to approach the grated window, and continued, in an under voice: "In truth, on account of the scarcity of the times, it was not intended to substitute any one in the place of that young woman; but I will speak to the Lady-Abbess; and at a word from me . . . at the request of the Father-guardian . . . in short, I give the place as a settled thing."

The Guardian began to return thanks, but the Signora interrupted him: "There is no need of ceremony: in a case of necessity I should not hesitate to apply for the assistance of the Capuchin Fathers. In fact," continued she, with a smile, in which appeared an indescribable air of mockery and bitterness; "in fact, are we not brothers and sisters?"

So saying, she called a lay-sister, (two of whom were, by a singular distinction, assigned to her private service,) and desired her to inform the Abbess of the circumstance; then sending for the portress to the door of the cloister, she concerted with her and Agnese the necessary arrangements. Dismissing her, she bade farewell to the Guardian, and detained Lucia. The

Guardian accompanied Agnese to the door, giving her new instructions by the way, and went to write his letter of report to his friend Cristoforo. "An extraordinary character, that Signora!" thought he, as he walked home: "Very curious! But one who knows the right way to go to work, can make her do whatever he pleases. My good friend Cristoforo certainly does not expect that I can serve him so quickly and so well. That noble fellow! There is no help for it: he must always have something in hand. But he is doing good. It is well for him this time, that he has found a friend who has brought the affair to a good conclusion in a twinkling, without so much noise, so much preparation, so much ado. This good Cristoforo will surely be satisfied, and see that even we here are good for something."

The Signora, who, in the presence of a Capuchin of advanced age, had studied her actions and words, now, when left *tête-à-tête* with an inexperienced country girl, no longer attempted to restrain herself; and her conversation became by degrees so strange, that, instead of relating it, we think it better briefly to narrate the previous history of this unhappy person: so much, that is, as will suffice to account for the unusual and mysterious conduct we have witnessed in her, and to explain the motives of her behaviour in the facts which we shall be obliged to relate.

She was the youngest daughter of the Prince * * *, a Milanese nobleman, who was esteemed one of the richest men of the city. But the unbounded idea he entertained of his title made his property appear scarcely sufficient, nay, even too limited to maintain a proper appearance; and all his attention was turned towards keeping it, at least, such as it was, in one line, so far as it depended upon himself. How many children he had does not appear from history: it merely records that he had designed all the younger branches of both sexes for

the cloister, that he might leave his property entire to the eldest son, destined to perpetuate the family: that is, bring up children that he might torment himself in tormenting them after his father's example. Our unhappy Signora was yet unborn when her condition was irrevocably determined upon. It only remained to decide whether she should be a monk or a nun, a decision, for which, not her assent, but her presence, was required. When she was born, the Prince, her father, wishing to give her a name that would always immediately suggest the idea of a cloister, and which had been borne by a saint of high family, called her Gertrude. Dolls dressed like nuns were the first playthings put into her hands; then images in nuns' habits, accompanying the gift with admonitions to prize them highly, as very precious things, and with that affirmative interrogation, "Beautiful, eh?" When the prince, or the princess, or the young prince, the only one of the sons brought up at home, would represent the happy prospects of the child, it seemed as if they could find no other way of expressing their ideas than by the words, "What a lady abbess!" No one, however, directly said to her, "You must become a nun." It was an intention understood and touched upon incidentally in every conversation relating to her future destiny. If at any time the little Gertrude indulged in rebellious or imperious behaviour, to which her natural disposition easily inclined her, "You are a naughty little girl," they would say to her: "this behaviour is very unbecoming. When you are a lady-abbess, you shall then command with a rod: you can then do as you please." On another occasion, the Prince reproving her for her too free and familiar manners, into which she easily fell: "Hey! hey!" he cried; "they are not becoming to one of your rank. If you wish some day to engage the respect that is due to you, learn from henceforth to be more reserved:

remember you ought to be in everything the first in the monastery, because you carry your rank wherever you go."

Such language imbued the mind of the little girl with the implicit idea that she was to be a nun; but her father's words had more effect upon her than all the others put together. The manners of the Prince were habitually those of an austere master, but when treating of the future prospects of his children, there shone forth in every word and tone an immovability of resolution which inspired the idea of a fatal necessity.

At six years of age, Gertrude was placed for education, and still more as a preparatory step towards the vocation imposed upon her, in the monastery where we have seen her; and the selection of the place was not without design. The worthy guide of the two women has said that the father of the Signora was the first man in Monza; and, comparing this testimony, whatever it may be worth, with some other indications which our anonymous author unintentionally suffers to escape here and there, we may very easily assert that he was the feudal head of that country. However it may be, he enjoyed here very great authority, and thought that here, better than elsewhere, his daughter would be treated with that distinction and deference which might induce her to choose this monastery as her perpetual abode. Nor was he deceived: the then abbess and several intriguing nuns—who had the management of affairs, finding themselves entangled in some disputes with another monastery, and with a noble family of the country, were very glad of the acquisition of such a support—received with much gratitude the honour bestowed upon them, and fully entered into the intentions of the Prince concerning the permanent settlement of his daughter; intentions on every account entirely consonant with their interests. Immediately on Ger-

trude's entering the monastery, she was called by Antonomasia, the Signorina.* A separate place was assigned her at table, and a private sleeping apartment; her conduct was proposed as an example to others; indulgences and caresses were bestowed upon her without end, accompanied with that respectful familiarity so attractive to children, when observed in those whom they see treating other children with an habitual air of superiority. Not that all the nuns had conspired to draw the poor child into the snare; many there were of simple and undesigning minds, who would have shrunk with horror from the thought of sacrificing a child to interested views; but all of them being intent on their several individual occupations, some did not notice all these manœuvres, others did not discern how dishonest they were; some abstained from looking into the matter, and others were silent rather than give useless offence. There was one, too, who, remembering how she had been induced by similar arts to do what she afterwards repented of, felt a deep compassion for the poor little innocent, and showed that compassion by bestowing on her tender and melancholy caresses, which she was far from suspecting were tending towards the same result; and thus the affair proceeded. Perhaps it might have gone on thus to the end, if Gertrude had been the only little girl in the monastery; but, among her school-fellows, there were some who knew they were designed for marriage. The little Gertrude, brought up with high ideas of her superiority, talked very magnificently of her future destiny as Abbess and principal of the monastery; she wished to be an object of envy to the others on every account, and saw with astonishment and vexation that some of them paid no attention to all her boasting. To the majestic, but circumscribed and cold images, the head-ship of a monastery could furnish,

* The young lady.

they opposed the varied and bright pictures of a husband, guests, routs, towns, tournaments, retinues, dress, and equipages. Such glittering visions roused in Gertrude's mind that excitement and ardour which a large basket-full of freshly-gathered flowers would produce, if placed before a bee-hive. Her parents and teachers had cultivated and increased her natural vanity, to reconcile her to the cloisters; but when this passion was excited by ideas so much calculated to stimulate it, she quickly entered into them with a more lively and spontaneous ardour. That she might not be below her companions, and influenced at the same time by her new turn of mind, she replied that, at the time of decision, no one could compel her to take the veil without her consent; that she, too, could marry, live in a palace, enjoy the world, and that better than any of them; that she *could* if she wished it, that she *would* if she wished it; and that, in fact, she *did* wish it. The idea of the necessity of her consent, which hitherto had been, as it were, unnoticed, and hidden in a corner of her mind, now unfolded and displayed itself in all its importance. On every occasion she called it to her aid, that she might enjoy in tranquillity the images of a self-chosen future. Together with this idea, however, there invariably appeared another; that the refusal of this consent involved rebellion against her father, who already believed it, or pretended to believe it, a decided thing; and at this remembrance, the child's mind was very far from feeling the confidence which her words proclaimed. She would then compare herself with her companions, whose confidence was of a far different kind, and experienced lamentably that envy of their condition which, at first, she endeavoured to awaken in them. From envy she changed to hatred; which she displayed in contempt, rudeness, and sarcastic speeches; while, sometimes, the conformity of her inclinations and hopes with theirs,

suppressed her spite, and created in her an apparent and transient friendship. At times, longing to enjoy something real and present, she would feel a complacency in the distinctions accorded to her, and make others sensible of this superiority; and then, again, unable to tolerate the solitude of her fears and desires, she would go in search of her companions, her haughtiness appeased, almost, indeed, imploring of them kindness, counsel, and encouragement. In the midst of such pitiable warfare with herself and others, she passed her childhood, and entered upon that critical age at which an almost mysterious power seems to take possession of the soul, arousing, refreshing, invigorating all the inclinations and ideas, and sometimes transforming them, or turning them into some unlooked-for channel. That which, until now, Gertrude had most distinctly figured in these dreams of the future, was external splendour and pomp; a something soothing and kindly, which, from the first, was lightly, and, as it were, mistily, diffused over her mind, now began to spread itself and predominate in her imagination. It took possession of the most secret recesses of her heart, as of a gorgeous retreat; hither she retired from present objects; here she entertained various personages strangely compounded of the confused remembrances of childhood, the little she had seen of the external world, and what she had gathered in conversations with her companions; she entertained herself with them, talked to them, and replied in their name; here she gave commands, and here she received homage of every kind. At times, the thoughts of religion would come to disturb these brilliant and toilsome revels. But religion, such as it had been taught to this poor girl, and such as she had received it, did not prohibit pride, but rather sanctified it, and proposed it as a means of obtaining earthly felicity. Robbed thus of its essence, it was no longer

religion, but a phantom like the rest. In the intervals in which this phantom occupied the first place, and ruled in Gertrude's fancy, the unhappy girl, oppressed by confused terrors, and urged by an indefinite idea of duty, imagined that her repugnance to the cloister, and her resistance to the wishes of her superiors in the choice of her state of life, was a fault; and she resolved in her heart to expiate it, by voluntarily taking the veil.

It was a rule, that, before a young person could be received as a nun, she should be examined by an ecclesiastic, called the vicar of the nuns, or by some one deputed by him; that it might be seen whether the lot were her deliberate choice or not; and this examination could not take place for a year after she had, by a written request, signified her desire to the vicar. Those nuns who had taken upon themselves the sad office of inducing Gertrude to bind herself for ever with the least possible consciousness of what she was doing, seized one of the moments we have described to persuade her to write and sign such a memorial. And, in order the more easily to persuade her to such a course, they failed not to affirm and impress upon her, what, indeed, was quite true, that, after all, it was a mere formality, which could have no effect, without other and posterior steps, depending entirely upon her own will. Nevertheless, the memorial had scarcely reached its destination, before Gertrude repented having written it. Then she repented of these repentances; and thus days and months were spent in an incessant alternation of wishes and regrets. For a long while she concealed this act from her companions; sometimes from fear of exposing her good resolution to opposition and contradiction, at others from shame at revealing her error; but, at last, the desire of unburdening her mind, and of seeking advice and encouragement, conquered.

Another rule was this; that a young girl was not to be

admitted to this examination upon the course of life she had chosen, until she had resided for at least a month out of the convent where she had been educated. A year had almost passed since the presentation of this memorial; and it had been signified to Gertrude that she would shortly be taken from the monastery, and sent to her father's house, for this one month, there to take all the necessary steps towards the completion of the work she had really begun. The prince, and the rest of the family, considered it an assured thing, as if it had already taken place. Not so, however, his daughter; instead of taking fresh steps, she was engaged in considering how she could withdraw the first. In her perplexity, she resolved to open her mind to one of her companions, the most sincere, and always the readiest to give spirited advice. She advised Gertrude to inform her father, by letter, that she had changed her mind, since she had not the courage to pronounce to his face, at the proper time, a bold *I will not*. And as gratuitous advice in this world is very rare, the counsellor made Gertrude pay for this by abundance of raillery upon her want of spirit. The letter was agreed upon with three or four confidantes, written in private, and despatched by means of many deeply-studied artifices. Gertrude waited with great anxiety for a reply; but none came; excepting that, a few days afterwards, the Abbess, taking her aside, with an air of mystery, displeasure, and compassion, let fall some obscure hints about the great anger of her father, and a wrong step she must have been taking; leaving her to understand, however, that if she behaved well, she might still hope that all would be forgotten. The poor young girl understood it, and dare not venture to ask any further explanation.

At last, the day so much dreaded, and so ardently wished for, arrived. Although Gertrude knew well enough that she was going to a great struggle, yet to

leave the monastery, to pass the bounds of those walls in which she had been for eight years immured, to traverse the open country in a carriage, to see once more the city and her home, filled her with sensations of tumultuous joy. As to the struggle, with the direction of her confidantes, she had already taken her measures, and concerted her plans. Either they will force me, thought she, and then I will be immovable—I will be humble and respectful, but will refuse; the chief point is not to pronounce another “*Yes*,” and I will not pronounce it. Or they will catch me with good words; and I will be better than they; I will weep, I will implore, I will move them to pity; at last, will only intreat that I may not be sacrificed. But, as it often happens in similar cases of foresight, neither one nor the other supposition was realized. Days passed, and neither her father, nor any one else, spoke to her about the petition, or the recantation; and no proposal was made to her, with either coaxing or threatening. Her parents were serious, sad, and morose towards her, without ever giving a reason for such behaviour. It was only to be understood that they regarded her as faulty and unworthy; a mysterious anathema seemed to hang over her, and divide her from the rest of her family, merely suffering so much intercourse as was necessary to make her feel her subjection. Seldom, and only at certain fixed hours, was she admitted to the company of her parents and elder brother. In the conversations of these three there appeared to reign a great confidence, which rendered the exclusion of Gertrude doubly sensible and painful. No one addressed her; and if she ventured timidly to make a remark, unless very evidently called for, her words were either unnoticed, or were responded to by a careless, contemptuous, or severe look. If unable any longer to endure so bitter and humiliating a distinction, she

sought and endeavoured to mingle with the family, and implored a little affection; she soon heard some indirect but clear hint thrown out about her choice of a monastic life, and was given to understand that there was one way of regaining the affection of the family; and since she would not accept of it on these conditions, she was obliged to draw back, to refuse the first advances towards the kindness she so much desired, and to continue in her state of excommunication; continue in it, too, with a certain appearance of being to blame.

Such impressions from surrounding objects painfully contradicted the bright visions with which Gertrude had been so much occupied, and which she still secretly indulged in her heart. She had hoped that, in her splendid and much-frequented home, she should have enjoyed at least some real taste of the pleasures she had so long imagined; but she found herself wofully deceived. The confinement was as strict and close at home as in the convent; to walk out for recreation was never even spoken of; and a gallery that led from the house to an adjoining church, obviated the sole necessity there might have been to go into the street. The company was more uninteresting, more scarce, and less varied than in the monastery. At every announcement of a visitor, Gertrude was obliged to go upstairs, and remain with some old woman in the service of the family; and here she dined whenever there was company. The domestic servants concurred in behaviour and language with the example and intentions of their master; and Gertrude, who by inclination would have treated them with lady-like unaffected familiarity; and who, in the rank in which she was placed, would have esteemed it a favour if they had shown her any little mark of kindness as an equal, and even have stooped to ask it, was now humbled and annoyed at being treated with a manifest indifference, although accompanied by a slight

obsequiousness of formality. She could not, however, but observe, that one of these servants, a page, appeared to bear her a respect very different to the others, and to feel a peculiar kind of compassion for her. The behaviour of this youth approached more nearly than anything she had yet seen to the state of things that Gertrude had pictured to her imagination, and more resembled the doings of her ideal characters. By degrees, a strange transformation was discernible in the manners of the young girl; there appeared a new tranquillity, and at the same time, a restlessness, differing from her usual disquietude; her conduct was that of one who has found a treasure which oppresses him, which he incessantly watches, and hides from the view of others. Gertrude kept her eyes on this page more closely than ever; and, however it came to pass, she was surprised one unlucky morning by a chamber-maid, while secretly folding up a letter, in which it would have been better had she written nothing. After a brief altercation, the maid got possession of the letter, and carried it to her master. The terror of Gertrude at the sound of his footsteps, may be more easily imagined than described. It was *her* father; he was irritated, and she felt herself guilty. But when he stood before her with that frowning brow, and the ill-fated letter in his hand, she would gladly have been a hundred feet under ground, not to say in a cloister. His words were few, but terrible; the punishment named at the time was only to be confined in her own room under the charge of the maid who had made the discovery; but this was merely a foretaste, a temporary provision; he threatened, and left a vague promise of some other obscure, undefined, and therefore more dreadful punishment.

The page was, of course, immediately dismissed, and was menaced with something terrible, if ever he should breathe a syllable about the past. In giving him this

intimation, the prince seconded it with two solemn blows, to associate in his mind with this adventure a remembrance that would effectually remove every temptation to make a boast of it. Some kind of pretext to account for the dismissal of a page was not difficult to find; as to the young lady, it was reported that she was ill.

She was now left to her fears, her shame, her remorse, and her dread of the future; with the sole company of this woman, whom she hated as the witness of her guilt, and the cause of her disgrace. She, in her turn, hated Gertrude, by whom she was reduced, she knew not for how long, to the wearisome life of a jailer, and had become for ever the guardian of a dangerous secret.

The first confused tumult of these feelings subsided by degrees; but each remembrance recurring by turns to her mind, was nourished there, and remained to torment her more distinctly, and at leisure. Whatever could the punishment be, so mysteriously threatened? Many, various, and strange, were the ideas that suggested themselves to the ardent and inexperienced imagination of Gertrude. The prospect that appeared most probable was, that she would be taken back to the monastery at Monza, no longer to appear as the Signorina, but as a guilty person, to be shut up there—who knew how long! who knew with what kind of treatment! Among the many annoyances of such a course, perhaps the most annoying was the dread of the shame she should feel. The expressions, the words, the very commas of the unfortunate letter, were turned over and over in her memory: she fancied them noticed and weighed by a reader so unexpected, so different from the one to whom they were destined in reply; she imagined that they might have come under the view of her mother, her brother, or indeed any one else; and, by comparison, all the rest seemed to her a mere nothing. The image of him who had been the primary cause of all this offence

failed not also frequently to beset the poor recluse : and it is impossible to describe the strange contrast this phantasm presented to those around her : so dissimilar, so serious, reserved, and threatening. But, since she could not separate his image from theirs, nor turn for a moment to those transient gratifications, without her present sorrows, as the consequence of them, suggesting themselves to her mind, she began, by degrees, to recall them less frequently, to repel the remembrance of them, and wean herself from such thoughts. She no longer willingly indulged in the bright and splendid fancies of her earlier days ; they were too much opposed to her real circumstances, and to every probability for the future. The only castle in which Gertrude could conceive a tranquil and honourable retreat, which was not in the air, was the monastery, if she could make up her mind to enter it for ever. Such a resolution, she could not doubt, would have repaired everything, atoned for every fault, and changed her condition in a moment. Opposed to this proposal, it is true, rose up the plans and hopes of her whole childhood : but times were changed ; and in the depths to which Gertrude had fallen, and in comparison of what, at times, she so much dreaded, the condition of a nun, respected, revered, and obeyed, appeared to her a bright prospect. Two sentiments of very different character indeed, contributed, at intervals, to overcome her former aversion : sometimes remorse for a fault, and a capricious sensibility of devotion ; and at other times, her pride embittered and irritated by the manners of her jailer, who, (often, it must be confessed, provoked to it,) revenged herself now by terrifying her with the prospect of the threatened punishment, or taunting her with the disgrace of her fault. When, however, she chose to be benign, she would assume a tone of protection, still more odious than insult. On these different occasions, the wish that

Gertrude felt to escape from her clutches, and to raise herself to a condition above either her anger or pity, became so vivid and urgent, that it made everything which could lead to such an end appear pleasant and agreeable.

At the end of four or five long days of confinement, Gertrude, disgusted and exasperated beyond measure by one of these sallies of her guardian, went and sat down in a corner of the room, and covering her face with her hands, remained for some time secretly indulging her rage. She then felt an overbearing longing to see some other faces, to hear some other words, to be treated differently. She thought of her father, of her family; and the idea made her shrink back in horror. But she remembered that it only depended upon her to make them her friends; and this remembrance awakened a momentary joy. Then there followed a confused and unusual sorrow for her fault, and an equal desire to expiate it. Not that her will was already determined upon such a resolution, but she had never before approached it so near. She rose from her seat, went to the table, took up the fatal pen, and wrote a letter to her father, full of enthusiasm and humiliation, of affliction and hope, imploring his pardon, and showing herself indefinitely ready to do anything that would please him who alone could grant it.



CHAPTER X.

HERE are times when the mind, of the young especially, is so disposed, that any external influence, however slight, suffices to call forth whatever has the appearance of virtuous self-sacrifice ; as a scarcely-expanded flower abandons itself negligently to its fragile stem, ready to yield its fragrance to the first breath of the zephyrs that float around. These moments, which others should regard with reverential awe, are exactly those which the wily and interested eagerly watch for, and seize with avidity, to fetter an unguarded will.

On the perusal of this letter the Prince * * * instantly saw a door opened to the fulfilment of his early and still cherished views. He therefore sent to Gertrude to come to him, and prepared to strike the iron while it was hot.

Gertrude had no sooner made her appearance, than, without raising her eyes towards her father, she threw herself upon her knees, scarcely able to articulate the word "Pardon." The Prince beckoned to her to rise, and then, in a voice little calculated to re-assure her, replied, that it was not sufficient to desire and solicit forgiveness, for that was easy and natural enough to one who had been convicted of a fault, and dreaded its punishment; that, in short, it was necessary she should deserve it. Gertrude, in a subdued and trembling voice, asked what she must do. To this question the prince (for we cannot find in our heart at this moment to give him the title of father) made no direct reply, but proceeded to speak at some length on Gertrude's fault, in words which grated upon the feelings of the poor girl like the drawing of a rough hand over a wound. He then went on to say, that even if supposing he ever had had at the first any intention of settling her in the world, she herself had now opposed an insuperable obstacle to such a plan; since a man of honour, as he was, could never bring himself to give to any gentleman a daughter who had shown such a specimen of her character. His wretched auditor was completely overwhelmed; and then the prince, gradually softening his voice and language, proceeded to say, that for every fault there was a remedy and a hope of mercy; that hers was one the remedy for which was very distinctly indicated; that she ought to see in this sad event a warning, as it were, that a worldly life was too full of danger for her

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed Gertrude, excited by fear, subdued by a sense of shame, and overcome at the instant by a momentary tenderness of spirit.

"Ah! you see it too," replied the Prince, instantly taking up her words. "Well, let us say no more of what is past: all is cancelled. You have taken the

only honourable and suitable course that remained for you; but, since you have chosen it willingly and cheerfully, it rests with me to make it pleasant to you in every possible way. I have the power of turning it to your advantage, and giving all the merit of the action to yourself, and I'll engage to do it for you." So saying, he rang a little bell that stood on the table, and said to the servant who answered it, — "The Princess and the young Prince immediately." Then turning to Gertrude, he continued: "I wish them to share in my satisfaction at once; and I wish you immediately to be treated by all as is fit and proper. You have experienced a little of the severe parent, but from henceforth you shall find me an affectionate father."

Gertrude stood thunderstruck at these words. One moment she wondered how that "yes," which had escaped her lips, could be made to mean so much: then she thought, was there no way of retracting—of restricting the sense; but the Prince's conviction seemed so unshaken, his joy so sensitively jealous, and his benignity so conditional, that Gertrude dared not utter a word to disturb them in the slightest degree.

The parties summoned quickly made their appearance, and, on seeing Gertrude, regarded her with an expression of surprise and uncertainty. But the Prince, with a cheerful and loving countenance, which immediately met with an answering look from them, said,— "Behold the wandering sheep: and I intend this to be the last word that shall awaken sad remembrances. Behold the consolation of the family! Gertrude no longer needs advisers, for she has voluntarily chosen what we desired for her good. She has determined—she has given me to understand that she has determined" Here Gertrude raised towards her father

a look between terror and supplication, as if imploring him to pause, but he continued boldly: "that she has determined to take the veil."

"*Brava!* well done!" exclaimed the mother and son, turning at the same time to embrace Gertrude, who received these congratulations with tears, which were interpreted as tears of satisfaction. The Prince then expatiated upon what he would do to render the situation of his daughter pleasant, and even splendid. He spoke of the distinction with which she would be regarded in the monastery and the surrounding country: that she would be like a princess, the representative of the family; that, as soon as ever her age would allow of it, she would be raised to the first dignity, and in the mean while would be under subjection only in name. The Princess and the young Prince renewed their congratulations and applauses, while poor Gertrude stood as if possessed by a dream.

"We had better fix the day for going to Monza to make our request of the Abbess," said the Prince. "How pleased she will be! I venture to say that all the monastery will know how to estimate the honour which Gertrude does them. Likewise . . . but why not go this very day? Gertrude will be glad to take an airing."

"Let us go, then," said the Princess.

"I will go and give orders," said the young Prince.

"But . . ." suggested Gertrude submissively.

"Softly, softly," replied the Prince, "Let her decide: perhaps she does not feel inclined to-day, and would rather delay till to-morrow. Tell me, would you prefer to-day or to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," answered Gertrude in a faint voice, thinking it something that she could get a little longer respite.

"To-morrow," pronounced the Prince, solemnly;

“she has decided that we go to-morrow. In the meanwhile I will go and ask the vicar of the nuns to name a day for the examination.”

No sooner said than done; the Prince took his departure, and absolutely went himself (no little act of condescension) to the vicar, and obtained a promise that he would attend her the day after to-morrow.

During the remainder of this day Gertrude had not two moments of quiet. She wished to have calmed her mind after so many scenes of excitement, to clear and arrange her thoughts, to render an account to herself of what she had done, and of what she was about to do, determine what she wished, and, for a moment at least, retard that machine, which, once started, was proceeding so precipitously; but there was no opening. Occupations succeeded one another without interruption—one treading, as it were, upon the heels of another. Immediately after this solemn interview, she was conducted to her mother's dressing-room, there, under her superintendence, to be dressed and adorned by her own waiting-maid. Scarcely was this business completed when dinner was announced. Gertrude was greeted on her way by the bows of the servants, who expressed their congratulations for her recovery; and, on reaching the dining-room, she found a few of their nearest friends, who had been hastily invited to do her honour, and to share in the general joy for the two happy events,—her restored health, and her choice of a vocation.

The young bride—(as the novices were usually distinguished, and Gertrude was saluted on all sides by this title on her first appearance)—the young bride had enough to do to reply to all the compliments that were addressed to her. She was fully sensible that every one of these answers was, as it were, an assent and confirmation; yet how could she reply otherwise?

Shortly after dinner came the driving hour, and Gertrude accompanied her mother in a carriage, with two uncles who had been among the guests. After the usual tour, they entered the Strada Marina, which crossed the space now occupied by the public gardens, and was the rendezvous of the gentry who drove out for recreation after the labours of the day. The uncles addressed much of their conversation to Gertrude, as was to be expected on such a day; and one of them, who seemed to be acquainted with every body, every carriage, every livery, and had every moment something to say about Signor this and Lady that, suddenly checked himself, and turning to his niece—"Ah, you young rogue!" exclaimed he; "you are turning your back on all these follies,—you are one of the saints; we poor worldly fellows are caught in the snare, but you are going to lead a religious life, and go to heaven in your carriage."

As evening approached they returned home, and the servants, hastily descending to meet them with lights, announced several visitors who were awaiting their return. The rumour had spread, and friends and relations crowded to pay their respects. On entering the drawing-room the young bride became the idol—the sole object of attention—the victim. Every one wished to have her to himself; one promised her pleasures,—another visits; one spoke of *Madre* this, her relation,—another of *Madre* that, an acquaintance; one extolled the climate of Monza,—another enlarged with great eloquence upon the distinctions she would there enjoy. Others, who had not yet succeeded in approaching Gertrude while thus besieged, stood watching their opportunity to address her, and felt a kind of regret until they had discharged their duty in this matter. By degrees the party dispersed, and Gertrude remained alone with the family.

“ At last,” said the Prince, “ I have had the pleasure of seeing my daughter treated as becomes her rank. I must confess that she has conducted herself very well, and has shown that she will not be prevented making the first figure, and maintaining the dignity of the family.” They then went to supper, so as to retire early, that they might be ready in good time in the morning.

Gertrude, annoyed, piqued, and at the same time a little puffed up by the compliments and ceremonies of the day, at this moment remembered all she had suffered from her jailer ; and, seeing her father so ready to gratify her in everything but one, she resolved to make use of this disposition for the indulgence of at least one of the passions which tormented her. She displayed a great unwillingness again to be left alone with her maid, and complained bitterly of her treatment.

“ What !” said the Prince ; “ did she not treat you with respect ? To-morrow I will reward her as she deserves. Leave it to me, and I will get you entire satisfaction. In the meanwhile, a child with whom I am so well pleased must not be attended by a person she dislikes.” So saying, he called another servant, and gave her orders to wait upon Gertrude, who, though certainly enjoying the satisfaction she received, was astonished at finding it so trifling, in comparison with the earnest wishes she had felt beforehand. The thought that, in spite of her unwillingness, predominated in her imagination, was the remembrance of the fearful progress she had this day made towards her cloistral life, and the consciousness that to draw back now would require a far, far greater degree of courage and resolution than would have sufficed a few days before, and which, even *then*, she felt she did not possess.

The woman appointed to attend her was an old servant of the family, who had formerly been the young Prince’s

governess, having received him from the arms of his nurse, and brought him up until he was almost a young man. In him she had centred all her pleasures, all her hopes, all her pride. She was delighted at this day's decision, as if it had been her own good fortune; and Gertrude, at the close of the day, was obliged to listen to the congratulations, praises, and advice of this old woman. She told her of some of her aunts and near relations who had been very happy as nuns, because, being of so high a family, they had always enjoyed the first honours, and had been able to have a good deal of influence beyond the walls of the convent; so that, from their parlour, they had come off victorious in undertakings in which the first ladies of the land had been quite foiled. She talked to her about the visits she would receive; she would some day be seeing the Signor Prince with his bride, who must certainly be some noble lady; and then not only the monastery, but the whole country would be in excitement. The old woman talked while undressing Gertrude; she talked after she had laid down, and even continued talking after Gertrude was asleep. Youth and fatigue had been more powerful than cares. Her sleep was troubled, disturbed, and full of tormenting dreams, but was unbroken, until the shrill voice of the old woman aroused her to prepare for her journey to Monza.

“Up, up, Signora bride; it is broad day-light, and you will want at least an hour to dress and arrange yourself. The Signora Princess is getting up; they awoke her four hours earlier than usual. The young Prince has already been down to the stables and come back, and is ready to start whenever you are. The creature is as brisk as a hare! but he was always so from a child: I have a right to say so who have nursed him in my arms. But when he's once set a-going, it won't do to oppose him; for, though he is

the best-tempered creature in the world, he sometimes gets impatient and storms. Poor fellow! one must pity him; it is all the effect of his temperament; and besides, this time there is some reason in it, because he is going to all this trouble for you. People must take care how they touch him at such times! he minds no one except the Signor Prince. But some day he will be the Prince himself; may it be as long as possible first, however. Quick, quick, Signorina, why do you look at me as if you were bewitched? You ought to be out of your nest at this hour."

At the idea of the impatient Prince, all the other thoughts which had crowded into Gertrude's mind on awaking, vanished before it, like a flock of sparrows on the sudden appearance of a scarecrow. She instantly obeyed, dressed herself in haste, and, after submitting to the decoration of her hair and person, went down to the saloon, where her parents and brother were assembled. She was then led to an arm-chair, and a cup of chocolate was brought to her, which in those days was a ceremony similar to that formerly in use among the Romans, of presenting the *toga virilis*.

When the carriage was at the door, the Prince drew his daughter aside, and said: "Come, Gertrude, yesterday you had every attention paid you; to-day you must overcome yourself. The point is now to make a proper appearance in the monastery and the surrounding country, where you are destined to take the first place. They are expecting you." (It is unnecessary to say that the Prince had despatched a message the preceding day to the Lady Abbess.) "They are expecting you, and all eyes will be upon you. You must maintain dignity and an easy manner. The Abbess will ask you what you wish, according to the usual form. You must reply that you request to be allowed to take the veil in the monastery where you have been so

lovingly educated, and have received so many kindnesses, which is the simple truth. You will pronounce these words with an unembarrassed air; for I would not have it said that you have been drawn in, and that you don't know how to answer for yourself. These good mothers know nothing of the past: it is a secret which must remain for ever buried in the family. Take care you don't put on a sorrowful or dubious countenance, which might excite any suspicion. Show of what blood you are: be courteous and modest; but remember that there, away from the family, there will be nobody above you."

Without waiting for a reply, the Prince led the way, Gertrude, the Princess, and the young Prince, following; and, going down stairs, they seated themselves in the carriage. The snares and vexations of the world, and the happy, blessed, life of the cloister, more especially for young people of noble birth, were the subjects of conversation during the drive. On approaching their destination, the Prince renewed his instructions to his daughter, and repeated over to her several times the prescribed form of reply. On entering this neighbourhood, Gertrude felt her heart beat violently; but her attention was suddenly arrested by several gentlemen, who stopped the carriage, and addressed numberless compliments to her. Then, continuing their way, they drove slowly up to the monastery, amongst the inquisitive gazes of the crowds who had collected upon the road. When the carriage stopped before these well-known walls, and that dreaded door, Gertrude's heart beat still more violently. They alighted between two wings of bystanders, whom the servants were endeavouring to keep back, and the consciousness that the eyes of all were upon her, compelled the unfortunate girl closely to study her behaviour; but, above all, those of her father kept her in awe; for, spite of the dread she had

of them, she could not help every moment raising her eyes to his, and, like invisible reins, they regulated every movement and expression of her countenance. After traversing the first court, they entered the second, where the door of the interior eloister was held open, and completely blockaded by nuns. In the first row stood the Abbess, surrounded by the eldest of the sisterhood; behind them the younger nuns promiscuously arranged, and some on tip-toe; and, last of all, the lay-sisters mounted on stools. Here and there among them were seen the glancing of certain bright eyes and some little faces peeping out from between the cowls: they were the most active and daring of the pupils, who, creeping in and pushing their way between nun and nun, had succeeded in making an opening where *they* might also see something. Many were the acclamations of this crowd, and many the hands held up in token of welcome and exultation. They reached the door, and Gertrude found herself standing before the Lady Abbess. After the first compliments, the superior, with an air between cheerfulness and solemnity, asked her what she wanted in that place, where there was no one who would deny her anything.

“I am here” began Gertrude; but, on the point of pronouncing the words which would almost irrevocably decide her fate, she hesitated a moment, and remained with her eyes fixed on the crowd before her. At this moment she caught the eye of one of her old companions, who looked at her with a mixed air of compassion and malice which seemed to say: ah! the boaster is caught. This sight, awakening more vividly in her mind her old feelings, restored to her also a little of her former courage; and she was on the point of framing a reply far different to the one which had been dictated to her, when, raising her eyes to her father’s face, almost, as it were, to try her strength, she encountered there

such a deep inquietude, such a threatening impatience, that, urged by fear, she continued with great precipitation, as if flying from some terrible object: "I am here to request permission to take the religious habit in this monastery, where I have been so lovingly educated." The Abbess quickly answered, that she was very sorry in this instance that the regulations forbade her giving an immediate reply, which must come from the general votes of the sisters, and for which she must obtain permission from her superiors; that, nevertheless, Gertrude knew well enough the feelings entertained towards her in that place, to foresee what the answer would be; and that, in the meanwhile, no regulation prevented the Abbess and the sisterhood from manifesting the great satisfaction they felt in hearing her make such a request. There then burst forth a confused murmur of congratulations and acclamations. Presently large dishes were brought filled with sweetmeats, and were offered first to the bride, and afterwards to her parents. While some of the nuns approached to greet Gertrude, others complimenting her mother, and others the young Prince, the Abbess requested the Prince to repair to the grate of the parlour of conference, where she would wait upon him. She was accompanied by two elders, and on his appearing, "Signor Prince," said she; "to obey the regulations . . . to perform an indispensable formality, though in this case . . . nevertheless I must tell you . . . that whenever a young person asks to be admitted to take the veil, . . . the superior, which I am unworthily . . . is obliged to warn the parents . . . that if by any chance . . . they should have constrained the will of their daughter, they are liable to excommunication. You will excuse me . . ."

"Oh! certainly, certainly, reverend mother. I admire your exactness; it is only right. . . . But you need not doubt . . ."

“ Oh ! think, Signor Prince I only spoke from absolute duty for the rest ”

“ Certainly, certainly, Lady Abbess.”

Having exchanged these few words, the two interlocutors reciprocally bowed and departed, as if neither of them felt very willing to prolong the interview, each retiring to his own party, the one outside, the other within the threshold of the cloister. “ Now then let us go,” said the Prince : “ Gertrude will soon have plenty of opportunity of enjoying as much as she pleases the society of these good mothers. For the present, we have put them to enough inconvenience.” And, making a low bow, he signified his wish to return : the party broke up, exchanged salutations, and departed.

During the drive home Gertrude felt little inclination to speak. Alarmed at the step she had taken, ashamed at her want of spirit, and vexed with others as well as herself, she tried to enumerate the opportunities which still remained of saying no, and languidly and confusedly resolved in her own mind that in this, or that, or the other instance she *would* be more open and courageous. Yet, in the midst of these thoughts, her dread of her father’s frown still held its full sway ; so that once, when, by a stealthy glance at his face, she was fully assured that not a vestige of anger remained, when she even saw that he was perfectly satisfied with her, she felt quite cheered, and experienced a real but transient joy.

On their arrival, a long toilette, dinner, visits, walks, a *conversazione* and supper, followed each other in rapid succession. After supper the Prince introduced another subject—the choice of a godmother. This was the title of the person who, being solicited by the parents, became the guardian and escort of the young novice, in the interval between the request and the admission ; an interval frequently spent in

visiting churches, public palaces, *conversazioni*, villas, and temples; in short, everything of note in the city and its environs; so that the young people, before pronouncing the irrevocable vow, might be fully aware of what they were giving up.

“We must think of a godmother,” said the Prince; “for to-morrow the vicar of the nuns will be here for the usual formality of an examination, and shortly afterwards Gertrude will be proposed in council for the acceptance of the nuns.”

In saying this he turned towards the Princess, and she, thinking he intended it as an invitation to her to make some proposal, was beginning: “There should be” But the Prince interrupted her.

“No, no, Signora Princess; the godmother should be acceptable above all to the bride; and though universal custom gives the selection to the parents, yet Gertrude has so much judgment, and such excellent discernment, that she richly deserves to be made an exception.” And here, turning to Gertrude, with the air of one who was bestowing a singular favour, he continued: “Any one of the ladies who were at the *conversazione* this evening possesses all the necessary qualifications for the office of godmother to a person of your family; and any one of them, I am willing to believe, will think it an honour to be made choice of. Do you choose for yourself.”

Gertrude was fully sensible that to make a choice was but to renew her consent; yet the proposition was made with so much dignity, that a refusal would have borne the appearance of contempt, and an excuse, of ignorance or fastidiousness. She therefore took this step also, and named a lady who had chiefly taken her fancy that evening; that is to say, one who had paid her the most attention, who had most applauded her, and who had treated her with those familiar, affec-

tionate, and engaging manners, which, on a first acquaintanceship, counterfeited a friendship of long standing. "An excellent choice," exclaimed the Prince, who had exactly wished and expected it. Whether by art or chance, it happened just as when a card-player, holding up to view a pack of cards, bids the spectator think of one, and then will tell him which it is, having previously disposed them in such a way that but one of them can be seen. This lady had been so much with Gertrude all the evening, and had so entirely engaged her attention, that it would have required an effort of imagination to think of another. These attentions, however, had not been paid without a motive: the lady had for some time fixed her eyes upon the young Prince as a desirable son-in-law; hence she regarded everything belonging to the family as her own; and therefore it was natural enough that she should interest herself for her dear Gertrude, no less than for her nearest relatives.

On the morrow, Gertrude awoke with the image of the approaching examination before her eyes; and, while she was considering if and how she could seize this most decisive opportunity to draw back, she was summoned by the Prince. "Courage, my child," said he: "until now you have behaved admirably, and it only remains to-day to crown the work. All that has been done hitherto has been done with your consent. If, in this interval, any doubts had arisen in your mind, any misgivings, or youthful regrets, you ought to have expressed them; but at the point at which we have now arrived, it is no longer the time to play the child. The worthy man who is coming to you this morning, will ask you a hundred questions about your election, and whether you go of your own good will, and why, and how, and what not besides. If you tantalize him in your replies, he will keep you under examination I

don't know how long. It would be an annoyance and a weariness to you; and it might produce a still more serious effect. After all the public demonstrations that have been made, every little hesitation you may display will risk my honour, and may make people think that I have taken a momentary fancy of yours for a settled resolution—that I have rushed headlong into the business—that I have what not? In this case, I shall be reduced to the necessity of choosing between two painful alternatives; either to let the world form a derogatory judgment of my conduct—a course which I absolutely cannot take, in justice to myself—or to reveal the true motive of your resolution, and” But here, observing that Gertrude coloured crimson, that her eyes became inflamed, and her face contracted like the petals of a flower in the sultry heat that precedes a storm, he broke off this strain, and continued with a serene face: “Come, come, all depends upon yourself—upon your judgment. I know that you are not deficient in it, and that you are not a child, to go spoil a good undertaking just at the conclusion; but I must foresee and provide for all contingencies. Let us say no more about it; only let me feel assured that you will reply with frankness so as not to excite suspicion in the mind of this worthy man. Thus you, also, will be set at liberty the sooner.” Then, after suggesting a few answers to the probable interrogations that would be put, he entered upon the usual topic of the pleasures and enjoyments prepared for Gertrude at the monastery, and contrived to detain her on this subject till a servant announced the arrival of the examiner. After a hasty repetition of the most important hints, he left his daughter alone with him, according to the usual custom.

The good man came with a slight pre-conceived opinion that Gertrude had a strong desire for a cloistral

life, because the prince had told him so, when he went to request his attendance. It is true that the good priest, who knew well enough that mistrust was one of the most necessary virtues of his office, held as a maxim that he should be very slow in believing such protestations, and should be on his guard against preconceptions; but it seldom happens that the positive affirmations of a person of such authority, in whatever matter, do not give a bias to the mind of those who hear them. After the usual salutations: "Signorina," said he, "I am coming to act the part of the tempter; I have come to excite doubts where your request expresses certainty, to place difficulties before your eyes, and to assure myself whether you have well considered them. Will you allow me to ask you some questions?"

"Proceed," replied Gertrude.

The worthy priest then began to question her in the usual prescribed forms. "Do you feel in your heart a free, voluntary resolution to become a nun? Have no threatenings, no flatteries been resorted to? Has no authority been made use of to persuade you to this step? Speak without reserve and with perfect sincerity to a man whose duty it is to ascertain your unbiassed will, that he may prevent your being compelled by any exercise of force to take such a course."

The true answer to such a demand rose up before Gertrude's mind with fearful distinctness. But to make that reply, she must come to an explanation; she must disclose what she had been threatened with, and relate a story The unhappy girl shrank back in horror from such an idea, and tried to find some other reply, which would more speedily release her from this unpleasant interview. "I wish to take the veil," said she, concealing her agitation—"I wish to take the veil at my own desire, voluntarily."

"How long have you had this desire?" again demanded the good priest.

"I have always felt it," replied Gertrude, rendered after this first step more unscrupulous about speaking the truth.

"But what is the principal motive that induces you to become a nun?"

The good priest little knew what a terrible chord he was touching; and Gertrude had to make a great effort not to betray in her countenance the effect which these words produced on her mind, as she replied: "My motive is to serve God, and to fly the perils of the world."

"May there not have been some disgust? Some . . . excuse me . . . some caprice? There are times when a passing cause may make an impression that seems at the moment sure to be lasting; but afterwards, when the cause is removed, and the mind calmed, then . . ."

"No, no," replied Gertrude, precipitately, "the reason is exactly what I have told you."

The vicar, rather to discharge his duty faithfully than because he thought it necessary, persisted in his inquiries; but Gertrude was resolved to deceive him. Besides the horror she felt at the thought of making him acquainted with her weakness, when he seemed so far from suspecting her of anything of the kind, the poor girl thought that though he could certainly easily prevent her taking the veil, yet that there was the end of his authority over her, or his power of protection. When once he had gone, she would be left alone with the prince, and of what she would then have to endure in that house, the worthy priest could know nothing; or, even if he did, he could only pity her. The examiner was tired of questioning, before the unfortunate girl of deceiving him; and, finding her replies invariably consistent, and having no reason to doubt their sincerity,

he at last changed his tone, and said all he could to confirm her in her good resolution; and, after congratulating her, he took his leave. Passing through one of the apartments, he met with the Prince, who appeared to fall in with him accidentally, and congratulated him on the good dispositions his daughter had displayed. The Prince had been waiting in a very wearisome state of suspense, but, on receiving this account, he breathed more freely, and, forgetting his usual gravity, he almost ran to Gertrude, and loaded her with commendations, caresses, and promises, with cordial satisfaction, and a tenderness of manner to a great degree sincere. Such a strange medley is the human heart!

We will not follow Gertrude in her continual round of sights and amusements, nor will we describe, either generally or particularly, the feelings of her mind during this period; it would be a history of sorrows and fluctuations too monotonous, and too much resembling what we have already related. The beauty of the surrounding seats, the continual variety of objects, and the pleasant excursions in the open air, rendered the idea of the place where she must shortly alight for the last time, more odious to her than ever. Still more painful were the impressions made upon her by the assemblies and amusements of the city. The sight of a bride, in the more obvious and common sense of the word, aroused in her envy and anguish, to a degree almost intolerable; and sometimes the sight of some other individual made her feel as if to hear that title given to herself would be the height of felicity. There were even times when the pomp of palaces, the splendour of ornaments, and the excitement and clamorous festivity of the *conversazione*, so infatuated her, and aroused in her such an ardent desire to lead a gay life, that she resolved to recant, and to suffer anything rather than turn to the cold and death-like shade of the cloister. But all these resolu-

tions vanished into air, on the calmer consideration of the difficulties of such a course, or on merely raising her eyes to the Prince's face. Sometimes, too, the thought that she must for ever abandon these enjoyments, made even this little taste of them bitter and wearisome to her; as the patient, suffering with thirst, eyes with vexation, and almost refuses with contempt, the spoonful of water the physician unwillingly allows him. In the meanwhile, the vicar of the nuns had despatched the necessary attestation, and permission arrived, to hold the conference for the election of Gertrude. The meeting was called; two-thirds of the secret votes, which were required by the regulations, were given, as was to be expected, and Gertrude was accepted. She herself, wearied with this long struggle, begged for immediate admission into the monastery, and no one came forward to oppose such a request. She was therefore gratified in her wish; and, after being pompously conducted to the monastery, she assumed the habit. After twelve months of noviciate, full of alternate regret and repentings, the time of public profession arrived; that is to say, the time when she must either utter a "no," more strange, more unexpected, and more disgraceful than ever; or pronounce a "yes," already so often repeated: she pronounced it, and became a nun for ever.

It is one of the peculiar and incommunicable properties of the Christian religion, that she can afford guidance and repose to all who, under whatever circumstances, or in whatever exigence, have recourse to her. If there is a remedy for the past, she prescribes it, administers it, and lends light and energy to put it in force, at whatever cost; if there is none, she teaches how to do that effectually and in reality, which the world prescribes proverbially,—make a virtue of necessity. She teaches how to continue with discretion what is thoughtlessly

undertaken; she inclines the mind to cleave stedfastly to what was imposed upon it by authority; and imparts to a choice which, though rash at the time, is now irrevocable, all the sanctity, all the advisedness, and, let us say it boldly, all the cheerfulness of a lawful calling. Here is a path so constructed that, let a man approach it by what labyrinth or precipice he may, he sets himself, from that moment, to walk in it with security and readiness, and at once begins to draw towards a joyful end. By this means, Gertrude might have proved a holy and contented nun, however she had become one. But, instead of this, the unhappy girl struggled under the yoke, and thus felt it heavier and more galling. An incessant recurrence to her lost liberty, abhorrence of her present condition, and a wearisome clinging to desires which could never be satisfied: these were the principal occupations of her mind. She recalled, over and over again, the bitterness of the past, re-arranged in her mind all the circumstances by which she had reached her present situation, and undid in thought a thousand times what she had done in act. She accused herself of want of spirit, and others of tyranny and perfidy, and pined in secret: she idolized and, at the same time, bewailed her beauty; deplored a youth destined to struggle in a prolonged martyrdom; and envied, at times, any woman, in whatever rank, with whatever acquirements, who could freely enjoy these gifts in the world.

The sight of those nuns who had co-operated in bringing her hither was hateful to her: she remembered the arts and contrivances they had made use of, and repaid them with incivilities, caprices, and even with open reproaches. These they were obliged to bear in silence; for though the Prince was willing enough to tyrannize over his daughter when he found it necessary to force her into the cloister, yet, having once obtained his purpose, he would not so willingly allow others to

assume authority over one of his family ; and any little rumour that might have reached his ears would have been an occasion of their losing his protection, or, perhaps, unfortunately, of changing a protector into an enemy. It would seem that she might have felt some kind of leaning towards those other sisters who had not lent a hand in this foul system of intrigue, and who, without having desired her for a companion, loved her as such ; and, always good, busy, and cheerful, showed her, by their example, that here, too, it was possible not only to live, but to be happy : but these, also, were hateful to her, for another reason : their consistent piety and contentment seemed to cast a reproof upon her disquietude and waywardness ; so that she never suffered an opportunity to escape of deriding them behind their backs as bigots, or reviling them as hypocrites. Perhaps she would have been less averse to them, had she known or guessed, that the few black balls found in the urn which decided her acceptance, had been put there by these very sisters.

She sometimes felt a little satisfaction in commanding, in being courted by those within the monastery and visited most flatteringly by those without, in accomplishing some undertaking, in extending her protection, in hearing herself styled the Signora ; but what consolations were these ? The mind which feels their insufficiency would gladly, at times, add to them, and enjoy with them, the consolations of religion : yet the one cannot be obtained without renouncing the other ; as a shipwrecked sailor, who would cling to the plank which is to bring him safely to shore, must relinquish his hold on the unsubstantial sea-weed which natural instinct had taught him to grasp.

Shortly after finally taking the veil, Gertrude had been appointed teacher of the young people who attended the convent for education, and it may easily be imagined

what would be their situation under such discipline. Her early companions had all left, but the passions called into exercise by them still remained; and, in one way or other, the pupils were compelled to feel their full weight. When she remembered that many of them were destined to that course of life of which she had lost every hope, she indulged against the poor children a feeling of rancour, which almost amounted to a desire of vengeance. This feeling she manifested by keeping them under, irritating them, and depreciating in anticipation the pleasures which they one day hoped to enjoy. Any one who had heard with what arrogant displeasure she rebuked them at such times for any little fault, would have imagined her a woman of undisciplined and injudicious temper. On other occasions, the same hatred for the rules and discipline of the cloister was displayed in fits of temper entirely different: then, she not only supported the noisy diversions of her pupils, but excited them; she would mingle in their games, and make them more disorderly; and, joining in their conversations, would imperceptibly lead them far beyond their intended limits. If one of them happened to allude to the lady abbess's love of gossiping, their teacher would imitate it at length, and act it like a scene in a comedy; would mimic the expression of one nun and the manners of another; and on these occasions would laugh immoderately; but her laughter came not from her heart. Thus she passed several years of her life, with neither leisure nor opportunity to make any change, until, to her misfortune, an occasion unhappily presented itself.

Among other privileges and distinctions accorded to her as a compensation for her not being abbess, was the special grant of a bed-chamber in a separate part of the monastery. This side of the building adjoined a house inhabited by a young man of professedly abandoned character; one of the many who, in those days,

by the help of their retinues of bravoës, and by combinations with other villains, were enabled, up to a certain point, to set at defiance public force, and the authority of the laws. Our manuscript merely gives him the name of Egidio. This man having, from a little window which overlooked the court-yard, seen Gertrude occasionally passing, or idly loitering there, and allured, rather than intimidated, by the dangers and impiety of the act, ventured one day to address her. The miserable girl replied. At first she experienced a lively, but not unmixed satisfaction. Into the painful void of her soul was infused a powerful and continual stimulus; a fresh principle, as it were, of vitality; but this enjoyment was like the restorative draught which the ingenious cruelty of the ancients presented to a condemned criminal, to strengthen him to bear the agonies of martyrdom. A great change, at the same time, was observable in her whole deportment; she became all at once more regular and tranquil, less bitter and sarcastic, and even showed herself friendly and affable; so that the sisters congratulated each other on the happy change; so far were they from imagining the real cause, and from understanding that this new virtue was nothing else than hypocrisy added to her former failings. This improvement, however, this external cleansing, so to speak, lasted but a short time, at least with any steadiness or consistency. She soon returned to her accustomed scorn and caprice, and renewed her imprecations and raillery against her cloistral prison, expressed sometimes in language hitherto unheard in that place, and from those lips. Nevertheless, a season of repentance succeeded each outbreak, and an endeavour to atone for it, and wipe out its remembrance by additional courtesies and kindness. The sisters were obliged to bear all these vicissi-

tudes as they best could, and attributed them to the wayward and fickle disposition of the Signora.

For some time no one seemed to think any longer about these matters; but one day the Signora, having had a dispute with a lay-sister for some trifling irregularity, continued to insult her so long beyond her usual bounds, that the sister, after having for some time gnawed the bit in silence, could no longer keep her patience, and threw out a hint that she knew something, and would reveal it when an opportunity occurred. From that moment the Signora had no peace. It was not long after that, one morning, the sister was in vain expected at her usual employment; she was sought in her cell, but fruitlessly; she was called loudly by many voices, but there was no reply; she was hunted and sought for diligently, here and there, above, below, from the cellar to the roof; but she was nowhere to be found. And who knows what conjectures might have been made, if, in searching for her, it had not happened that a large hole was discovered in the garden wall, which induced every one to think that she had made her escape thence. Messengers were immediately despatched in various directions to overtake her and bring her back; every inquiry was made in the surrounding country; but there was never the slightest information about her. Perhaps they might have known more of her fate, had they, instead of seeking at a distance, dug up the ground near at hand. After many expressions of surprise, because they never thought her a likely woman for such a deed; after many arguments, they concluded that she must have fled to some very great distance; and because a sister happened once to say, "She must certainly have taken refuge in Holland," it was ever after said and maintained in the monastery that she had fled to Holland. The Signora, however, did not seem to be of this opinion. Not that she manifested any disbelief, or opposed the

prevailing idea with her particular reasons; if she had any, certainly never were reasons better concealed; nor was there anything from which she more willingly abstained, than from alluding to this event, nor any matter in which she was less desirous to come to the bottom of the mystery. But the less she spoke of it, the more did it occupy her thoughts. How often during the day did the image of the ill-fated nun rush unbidden into her mind, and fix itself there, not easily to be removed! How often did she long to see the real and living being before her, rather than have her always in her thoughts, rather than be day and night in the company of that empty, terrible, impassible form! How often would she gladly have listened to her real voice, and borne her rebukes, whatever they might threaten, rather than be for ever haunted in the depths of her mental ear by the imaginary whispers of that same voice, and hear words to which it was useless to reply, repeated with a pertinacity and an indefatigable perseverance of which no living being was ever capable!

It was about a year after this event, that Lucia was presented to the Signora, and had the interview with her which we have described. The Signora multiplied her inquiries about Don Rodrigo's persecution, and entered into particulars with a boldness which must have appeared worse than novel to Lucia, who had never imagined that the curiosity of nuns could be exercised on such subjects. The opinions also which were mingled with these inquiries, or which she allowed to appear, were not less strange. She seemed almost to ridicule Lucia's great horror for the nobleman, and asked whether he were deformed, that he excited so much fear; and would have esteemed her retiring disposition almost irrational and absurd, if she had not beforehand given the preference to Renzo. And on this choice, too, she multiplied questions which astonished the

poor girl, and put her to the blush. Perceiving, however, afterwards, that she had given too free expression to her imagination, she tried to correct and interpret her language differently; but she could not divest Lucia's mind of a disagreeable wonder, and confused dread. No sooner did the poor girl find herself alone with her mother, than she opened her whole mind to her; but Agnese, being more experienced, in a very few words quieted her doubts, and solved the mystery. "Don't be surprised," said she; "when you know the world as well as I, you'll not think it anything very wonderful. Great people—some more, some less, some one way, and some another,—have all a little oddity. We must let them talk, particularly when we have need of them; we must pretend to be listening to them seriously, as if they were saying very right things. Didn't you hear how she silenced me, almost as if I had uttered some great nonsense? I was not a bit surprised at it. They are all so. However, Heaven be praised, that she seems to have taken such a fancy to you, and will really protect us. As to the rest, if you live, my child, and it falls to your lot to have anything more to do with gentlemen, you'll understand it, you'll understand it."

A desire to oblige the Father-guardian; the pleasure of extending protection; the thought of the good opinions that would result from so charitable an exercise of that protection; a certain inclination for Lucia, added to a kind of relief she would feel in doing a kindness to an innocent creature, and in assisting and comforting the oppressed, were the inducements which had really inclined the Signora to take an interest in the fate of these two poor fugitives. In obedience to the orders she gave, and from regard to the anxiety she displayed, they were lodged in the apartments of the portress, adjoining the cloister, and treated as if they were admitted into the service of the monastery. Both

mother and daughter congratulated themselves on having so soon found a secure and honourable asylum, and would gladly have remained unknown by every one; but this was not easy in a monastery, more especially when there was a man determined to get information about one of them; in whose mind vexation at having been foiled and deceived was added to his former passions and desires. Leaving the two women, then, in their retreat, we will return to this wretch's palace, while he was waiting the result of his iniquitous undertaking.

CHAPTER XI.

S a pack of hounds, after in vain tracking a hare, return desponding to their master, with heads hung down, and drooping tails, so, on this disastrous night, did the bravoës return to the palace of Don Rodrigo. He was listlessly pacing to and fro, in an unoccupied room upstairs that overlooked the terrace. Now and then he would stop to listen, or to peep through the chinks in the decayed window-frames, full of impatience, and not entirely free from disquietude—not only for the doubtfulness of success, but also for the possible consequences of the enterprise: this being the boldest and most hazardous in which our valiant cavalier had ever engaged. He endeavoured, however, to reassure himself with the thought of the precautions he had taken that not a trace of the perpetrator should be left. “As to suspicions, I care nothing for them. I should like to know who would be inclined to come hither, to ascertain if there be a young girl here or not. Let him dare to come—the rash fool—and he shall be well received! Let the friar come, if he pleases. The old woman? She shall be off to Bergamo. Justice? Poh! Justice! The *Po-destà* is neither a child nor a fool. And at Milan? Who will care for these people at Milan? Who will listen to them? Who knows even what they are? They are like lost people in the world,—they haven’t even a

master: they belong to no one. Come, come, never fear. How Attilio will be silenced to-morrow! He shall see whether I am a man to talk and boast. And then . . . if any difficulty should ensue What do I know? Any enemy who would seize this occasion . . . Attilio will be able to advise me; he is pledged to it for the honour of the whole family." But the idea on which he dwelt most, because he found it both a soother of his doubts and a nourisher of his predominating passion, was the thought of the flatteries and promises he would employ to gain over Lucia. "She will be so terrified at finding herself here alone, in the midst of these faces, that . . . in troth, mine is the most human among them . . . that she will look to me, will throw herself upon her knees to pray; and if she prays" . . .

While indulging in these fine anticipations, he hears a footstep, goes to the window, opens it a little, and peeps through: "It is they. And the litter!—Where is the litter? Three, five, eight; they are all there; there's Griso too; the litter's not there:—Griso shall give me an account of this."

When they reached the house, Griso deposited his staff, cap, and pilgrim's habit, in a corner of the ground-floor apartment, and, as if carrying a burden which no one at the moment envied him, ascended to render his account to Don Rodrigo. He was waiting for him at the head of the stairs; and on his approaching with the foolish and awkward air of a deluded villain, "Well," said, or rather vociferated, he, "Signor Boaster, Signor Captain, Signor *Leave-it-to-me*?"

"It is hard," replied Griso, resting one foot on the top step, "it is hard to be greeted with reproaches after having laboured faithfully, and endeavoured to do one's duty, at the risk of one's life."

"How has it gone? Let us hear, let us hear," said

Don Rodrigo; and, turning towards his room, Griso followed him, and briefly related how he had arranged, what he had done, seen and not seen, heard, feared and retrieved; relating it with that order and that confusion, that dubiousness and that astonishment, which must necessarily have together taken possession of his ideas.

"You are not to blame, and have done your best," said Don Rodrigo. "You have done what you could; but . . . but, if under this roof there be a spy! If there be, if I succeed in discovering him (and you may rest assured I'll discover him if he's here) I'll settle matters with him; I promise you, Griso, I'll pay him as he deserves."

"The same suspicion, Signor," replied he, "has crossed my mind; and if it be true, and we discover a villain of this sort, my master should put it into my hands. One who has diverted himself by making me pass such a night as this; it is *my* business to pay him for it. However, all things considered, it seems likely there may have been some other cross-purposes, which now we cannot fathom. To-morrow, Signor, to-morrow we shall be in clear water."

"Do you think you have been recognised?"

Griso replied that he hoped not; and the conclusion of the interview was, that Don Rodrigo ordered him to do three things next day, which he would have thought of well enough by himself. One was, to despatch two men, in good time in the morning, to the constable, with the intimation which we have already noticed; two others to the old house, to ramble about, and keep at a proper distance any loiterer who might happen to come there, and to conceal the litter from every eye till night-fall, when they would send to fetch it, since it would not do to excite suspicion by any further measures at present; and lastly, to go himself on a tour of dis-

covery, and despatch several others, of the most dexterity and good sense, on the same errand, that he might learn something of the causes and issue of the confusion of the night. Having given these orders, Don Rodrigo retired to bed, leaving Griso to follow his example, bidding him good night, and loading him with praises, through which appeared an evident desire to make some atonement, and in a manner to apologize for the precipitate haste with which he had reproached him on his arrival.

Go, take some rest, poor Griso, for thou must surely need it. Poor Griso! Labouring hard all day, labouring hard half the night, without counting the danger of falling into the hands of villains, or of having a price set upon thy head '*for the seizure of an honest woman,*' in addition to those already laid upon thee, and then to be received in this manner! but thus men often reward their fellows. Thou mightest, nevertheless, see in this instance, that sometimes people judge according to merit, and that matters are adjusted even in this world. Go, rest awhile; for some day thou mayest be called upon to give another and more considerable proof of thy faithfulness.

Next morning, Griso was again surrounded with business on all hands, when Don Rodrigo rose. This nobleman quickly sought Count Attilio, who, the moment he saw him approach, called out to him, with a look and gesture of raillery, "Saint Martin!"

"I have nothing to say," replied Don Rodrigo, as he drew near: "I will pay the wager; but it is not this that vexes me most. I told you nothing about it, because, I confess, I thought to surprise you this morning. But . . . stay, I will tell you all."

"That friar has a hand in this business," said his cousin, after having listened to the account with suspense and wonderment, and with more seriousness than

could have been expected from a man of his temperament. "I always thought that friar, with his dissembling and out-of-the-way answers, was a knave and a hypocrite. And you never opened yourself to me,—you never told me plainly what happened to entertain you the other day." Don Rodrigo related the conversation. "And did you submit to that?" exclaimed Count Attilio. "Did you let him go away as he came?"

"Would you have me draw upon myself all the Capuchins of Italy?"

"I don't know," said Attilio, "whether I should have remembered, at that moment, that there was another Capuchin in the world except this daring knave; but surely, even under the rules of prudence, there must be some way of getting satisfaction even on a Capuchin! We must manage to redouble civilities cleverly to the whole body, and then we can give a blow to one member with impunity. However, the fellow has escaped the punishment he best deserved; but I'll take him under my protection, and have the gratification of teaching him how to talk to gentlemen such as we are."

"Don't make matters worse for me."

"Trust me for once, and I'll serve you like a relation and a friend."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know yet; but rest assured I'll pay off the friar. I'll think about it, and . . . my uncle, the Signor Count of the Privy Council, will be the man to help me. Dear uncle Count! How fine it is, when I can make a politician of his stamp do all my work for me! The day after to-morrow I shall be at Milan, and, in one way or other, the friar shall be rewarded."

In the meanwhile breakfast was announced, which, however, made no interruption in the discussion of an affair of so much importance. Count Attilio talked about it freely; and though he took that side which his

friendship to his cousin and the honour of his name required, according to his ideas of friendship and honour, yet he could not help occasionally finding something to laugh at in the ill-success of his relative and friend. But Don Rodrigo, who felt it was his own cause, and who had so signally failed when hoping quietly to strike a great blow, was agitated by stronger passions, and distracted by more vexatious thoughts. "Fine talk," said he, "these rascals will make in the neighbourhood. But what do I care? As to justice, I laugh at it: there is no proof against me, and even if there were, I should care for it just as little: the constable was warned this morning to take good heed, at the risk of his life, that he makes no deposition of what has happened. Nothing will follow from it; but gossiping, when carried to any length, is very annoying to me. It's quite enough that I have been bullied so unmercifully."

"You did quite rightly," replied Count Attilio. "Your Podestà an obstinate, empty-pated, prosing fellow, that Podestà is nevertheless a gentleman, a man who knows his duty; and it is just when we have to do with such people, that we must take care not to bring them into difficulties. If that rascal of a constable should make a deposition, the Podestà, however well-intentioned, would be obliged"

"But you," interrupted Don Rodrigo, with some warmth, "you spoil all my affairs by contradicting him in everything, by silencing him, and laughing at him on every occasion." Why cannot a Podestà be an obstinate fool, when at the same time he is a gentleman?"

"Do you know, cousin," said Count Attilio, glancing towards him a look of raillery and surprise; "do you know that I begin to think you are half afraid? In earnest, you may rest assured that the Podestà"

"Well, well, didn't you yourself say that we must be careful?"

“ I did: and when it is a serious matter, I’ll let you see that I’m not a child. Do you know all that I have courage to do for you? I am ready to go in person to this Signor Podestà. Aha! how proud he will be of the honour! And I am ready, moreover, to let him talk for half an hour about the Count Duke, and the Spanish Signor, the governor of the castle, and to give an ear to everything, even when he talks so mightily about these people. Then I will throw in a few words about my uncle, the Signor Count of the Privy Council, and you will see what effect these words in the ear of the Signor Podestà will produce. After all, he has more need of our protection than you of his condescension. I will do my best, and will go to him, and leave him better disposed towards you than ever.”

After these, and a few similar words, Count Attilio set off on his expedition, and Don Rodrigo remained awaiting with anxiety Griso’s return. Towards dinner-time he made his appearance, and reported the success of his reconnoitring tour.

The tumult of the preceding night had been so clamorous, the disappearance of three persons from a village was so strange an occurrence, that the inquiries, both from interest and curiosity, would naturally be many, eager, and persevering; and, on the other hand, those who knew something were too numerous to agree in maintaining silence on the matter. Perpetua could not set foot out of doors without being assailed by one or another to know what it was that had so alarmed her master, and she herself, reviewing and comparing all the circumstances of the case, and perceiving how she had been imposed upon by Agnese, felt so much indignation at the act of perfidy, that she was ever ready to give vent to her feelings. Not that she complained to this or that person of the manner in which she was imposed upon: on this subject she did not breathe a syllable;

but the trick played upon her poor master she could not altogether pass over in silence; especially as such a trick had been concerted and attempted by that gentle creature, that good youth, and that worthy widow. Don Abbondio, indeed, might positively forbid her, and earnestly entreat her to be silent; and she could easily enough reply that there was no need to urge upon her what was so clear and evident; but certain it is that such a secret in the poor woman's breast was like very new wine in an old and badly-hooped cask, which ferments, and bubbles, and boils, and if it does not send the bung into the air, works itself about till it issues in froth, and penetrates between the staves, and oozes out in drops here and there, so that one can taste it, and almost decide what kind of wine it is. Gervase, who could scarcely believe that for once he was better informed than his neighbours, who thought it no little glory to have been a sharer in such a scene of terror, and who fancied himself a man like the others, from having lent a hand in an enterprise that bore the appearance of criminality, was dying to make a boast of it. And though Tonio, who thought with some dread of the inquiries, the possible processes, and the account that would have to be rendered, gave him many injunctions with his finger upon his lips, yet it was not possible to silence every word. Even Tonio himself, after having been absent from home that night at an unusual hour, and returning with an unusual step and air, and an excitement of mind that disposed him to candour,—even he could not dissimulate the matter with his wife; and she was not dumb. The person who talked least was Menico; for no sooner had he related to his parents the history and the object of his expedition, than it appeared to them so terrible a thing that their son had been employed in frustrating an undertaking of Don Rodrigo's, that they scarcely suffered the boy to finish his narration. They

then gave him most strenuous and threatening orders to take good heed that he did not give the least hint of anything; and the next morning, not yet feeling sufficiently confident in him, they resolved to keep him shut up in the house for at least that day, and perhaps even longer. But what then? They themselves afterwards, in chatting with their neighbours, without wishing to show that they knew more than others, yet when they came to that mysterious point in the flight of the three fugitives, and the how, and the why, and the where, added, almost as a well-known thing, that they had fled to Pescarenico. Thus this circumstance also was generally noised abroad.

With all these scraps of information, put together and compared as usual, and with the embellishments naturally attached to such relations, there were grounds for a story of more certainty and clearness than common, and such as might have contented the most criticising mind. But the invasion of the bravoës—an event too serious and notorious to be left out, and one on which nobody had any positive information—was what rendered the story dark and perplexing. The name of Don Rodrigo was whispered about; and so far all were agreed; but beyond, everything was obscurity and dissension. Much was said about the two bravoës who had been seen in the street towards evening, and of the other who had stood at the inn door; but what light could be drawn from this naked fact? They inquired of the landlord, “Who had been there the night before?” but the landlord could not even remember that he had seen anybody that evening; and concluded his answer, as usual, with the remark that his inn was like a sea-port. Above all, the pilgrim seen by Stefano and Carlandrea puzzled their heads and disarranged their conjectures—that pilgrim whom the robbers were murdering, and who had gone away with them, or whom they had carried off—what

could he be doing? He was a good spirit come to the aid of the women; he was the wicked spirit of a roguish pilgrim-impostor, who always came by night to join such companions, and perform such deeds, as he had been accustomed to when alive; he was a living and true pilgrim, whom they attempted to murder, because he was preparing to arouse the village; he was (just see what they went so far as to conjecture!) one of these very villains, disguised as a pilgrim; he was this, he was that; he was so many things, that all the sagacity and experience of Griso would not have sufficed to discover who he was, if he had been obliged to glean this part of the story from others. But, as the reader knows, that which rendered it so perplexing to others, was exactly the clearest point to him; and serving as a key to interpret the other notices, either gathered immediately by himself, or through the medium of his subordinate spies, it enabled him to lay before Don Rodrigo a report sufficiently clear and connected. Closeted with him, he told him of the blow attempted by the poor lovers, which naturally accounted for his finding the house empty, and the ringing of the bell, without which they would have been obliged to suspect traitors (as these two worthy men expressed it) in the house. He told him of the flight; and for this, too, it was easy to find more than one reason—the fear of the lovers on being taken in a fault, or some rumour of their invasion, when it was discovered, and the village roused. Lastly, he told him that they had gone to Pescarenico, but further than this his knowledge did not extend. Don Rodrigo was pleased to be assured that no one had betrayed him, and to find that no traces remained of his enterprise; but it was a light and passing pleasure. “Fled together!” cried he: “together! And that rascally friar!—that friar!” The word burst forth hoarsely from his throat, and half-smothered between his teeth, as he bit his nails with

vexation: his countenance was as brutal as his passion. "That friar shall answer for it. Griso, I am not myself . . . I must know, I must find out . . . this night I must know where they are. I have no peace. To Pescarenico directly, to know, to see, to find . . . Four crowns on the spot, and my protection for ever. This night I must know. And that villain! . . . that friar . . ."

Once more Griso was in the field; and in the evening of that same day he could impart to his worthy patron the desired information, and by this means.

One of the greatest consolations of this world is friendship, and one of the pleasures of friendship is to have some one to whom we may entrust a secret. Now, friends are not divided into pairs, as husband and wife: everybody, generally speaking, has more than one; and this forms a chain of which no one can find the first link. When, then, a friend meets with an opportunity of depositing a secret in the breast of another, he, in his turn, seeks to share in the same pleasure. He is entreated, to be sure, to say nothing to anybody; and such a condition, if taken in the strict sense of the words, would immediately cut short the chain of these gratifications: but general practice has determined that it only forbids the entrusting of a secret to everybody but one equally confidential friend, imposing upon him, of course, the same conditions. Thus, from confidential friend to confidential friend, the secret threads its way along this immense chain, until, at last, it reaches the ear of him or them whom the first speaker exactly intended it should never reach. However, it would, generally, have to be a long time on the way, if everybody had but two friends, the one who tells him, and the one to whom he repeats it with the injunction of silence. But some highly-favoured men there are who reckon these blessings by the hundred, and when the secret comes into the hands

of one of these, the circles multiply so rapidly that it is no longer possible to pursue them. Our author has been unable to certify through how many mouths the secret had passed which Griso was ordered to discover, but certain it is that the good man who had escorted the women to Monza, returning in his cart to Pescarenico, towards evening, happened, before reaching home, to light upon one of these trustworthy friends, to whom he related, in confidence, the good work he had just completed, and its sequel; and it is equally certain that, two hours afterwards, Griso was able to return to the palace, and inform Don Rodrigo that Lucia and her mother had found refuge in a convent at Monza, and that Renzo had pursued his way to Milan.

Don Rodrigo felt a malicious satisfaction on hearing of this separation, and a revival of hope that he might at length accomplish his wicked designs. He spent great part of the night in meditating on his plans, and arose early in the morning with two projects in his mind, the one determined upon, the other only roughly sketched out. The first was immediately to despatch Griso to Monza, to learn more particular tidings of Lucia, and to know what (if anything) he might attempt. He therefore instantly summoned this faithful servant, placed in his hand four crowns, again commended him for the ability by which he had earned them, and gave him the order he had been premeditating.

“Signor . . .” said Griso, feeling his way.

“What? haven’t I spoken clearly?”

“If you would send somebody . . .”

“How?”

“Most illustrious Signor, I am ready to give my life for my master: it is my duty; but I know also you would not be willing unnecessarily to risk that of your dependents.”

“Well?”

“Your illustrious lordship knows very well how many prices are already set upon my head; and . . . here I am under the protection of your lordship; we are a party; the Signor Podestà is a friend of the family; the bailiffs bear me some respect; and I, too . . . it is a thing that does me little honour—but to live quietly . . . I treat them as friends. In Milan, your lordship’s livery is known; but in Monza *I* am known there instead. And is your lordship aware that—I don’t say it to make a boast of myself—that any one who could hand me over to justice, or deliver in my head, would strike a great blow. A hundred crowns at once, and the privilege of liberating two banditti.”

“What!” exclaimed Don Rodrigo, with an oath: “you showing yourself a vile cur that has scarcely courage to fly at the legs of a passer-by, looking behind him for fear they should shut the door upon him, and not daring to leave it four yards!”

“I think, Signor patron, that I have given proof. . . .”

“Then!”

“Then,” frankly replied Griso, when thus brought to the point, “then your lordship will be good enough to reckon as if I had never spoken: heart of a lion, legs of a hare, and I am ready to set off.”

“And I didn’t say you should go alone. Take with you two of the bravest . . . lo Sfregiato,* and il Tira-dritto:† go with a good heart, and be our own Griso. What! three faces like yours, quietly passing by, who do you think wouldn’t be glad to let them pass? The bailiffs at Monza must needs be weary of life to stake against it a hundred crowns in so hazardous a game. And, besides, don’t you think I am so utterly unknown there, that a servant of mine would be counted as nobody.”

After thus shaming Griso a little, he proceeded to give

* Cut-face.

† Aim-well.

him more ample and particular instructions. Griso took his two companions, and set off with a cheerful and hardy look, but cursing, in the bottom of his heart, Monza, and interdicts, and women, and the fancies of patrons; he walked on like a wolf which, urged by hunger, his body emaciated, and the furrows of his ribs impressed upon his grey hide, descends from the mountains, where everything is covered with snow, proceeds suspiciously along the plain, stops, from time to time, with uplifted foot, and waves his hairless tail;

“ Raises his nose, and snuffs the faithless wind,”

if perchance it may bring him the scent of man or beast; erects his sharp ears, and rolls around two sanguinary eyes, from which shine forth both eagerness for the prey and terror of pursuit. If the reader wishes to know whence I have got this fine line, it is taken from a small unpublished work on Crusaders and Lombards, which will shortly be published, and make a great stir; and I have borrowed it because it suited my purpose, and told where I got it, that I might not take credit due to others: so let no one think it a plan of mine to proclaim that the author of this little book and I are like brothers, and that I rummage at will among his manuscripts.

The other project of Don Rodrigo's, was the devising of some plan to prevent Renzo's again rejoining Lucia, or setting foot in that part of the country. He therefore resolved to spread abroad rumours of threats and snares, which, coming to his hearing through some friend, might deprive him of any wish to return to that neighbourhood. He thought, however, that the surest way of doing this would be to procure his banishment by the state; and to succeed in his project, he felt that law would be more likely to answer his purpose than force. He could, for example, give a little colouring to the

attempt made at the parsonage, paint it as an aggressive and seditious act, and, by means of the doctor, signify to the Podestà that this was an opportunity of issuing an apprehension against Renzo. But our deliberator quickly perceived that it would not do for him to meddle in this infamous negotiation; and, without pondering over it any longer, he resolved to open his mind to Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli; so far, that is, as was necessary to make him acquainted with his desire. — There are so many edicts! thought Don Rodrigo: and the Doctor's not a goose: he will be sure to find something to suit my purpose—some quarrel to pick with this rascally fellow of a weaver: otherwise he must give up his name. —But (how strangely matters are brought about in this world!) while Don Rodrigo was thus fixing upon the doctor, as the man most able to serve him, another person, one that nobody would imagine, even Renzo himself, was labouring, so to say, with all his heart, to serve him, in a far more certain and expeditious way than any the doctor could possibly have devised.

I have often seen a child, more active, certainly, than needs be, but at every movement giving earnest of becoming, some day, a brave man: I have often, I say, seen such a one busied, towards evening, in driving to cover a drove of little Indian pigs, which had been allowed all day to ramble about in a field or orchard. He would try to make them all enter the fold in a drove; but it was labour in vain: one would strike off to the right, and while the little drover was running to bring him back into the herd, another, or two, or three, would start off to the left, in every direction. So that, after getting out of all patience, he at last adapted himself to their ways, first driving in those which were nearest to the entrance, and then going to fetch the others, one or two at a time, as they happened to have strayed away. A similar game we are obliged to play

with our characters;—having sheltered Lucia, we ran to Don Rodrigo, and now we must leave him to receive Renzo, who meets us in our way.

After the mournful separation we have related, he proceeded from Monza towards Milan, in a state of mind our readers can easily imagine. To leave his own dwelling; and, what was worse, his native village; and, what was worse still, Lucia; to find himself on the high road, without knowing where he was about to lay his head, and all on account of that villain! When this image presented itself to Renzo's mind, he would be quite swallowed up with rage and the desire of vengeance; but then he would recollect the prayer which he had joined in offering up with the good friar in the church at Pescarenico, and repent of his anger; then he would again be roused to indignation; but seeing an image in the wall, he would take off his hat, and stop a moment to repeat a prayer; so that during this journey he had killed Don Rodrigo, and raised him to life again, at least twenty times. The road here was completely buried between two high banks, muddy, stony, furrowed with deep cart-ruts, which, after a shower, became perfect streams; and where these did not form a sufficient bed for the water, the whole road was inundated and reduced to a pool, so as to be almost impassable. At such places, a steep footpath, in the form of steps, up the bank, indicated that other passengers had made a track in the fields. Renzo mounted by one of these passes to the more elevated ground, and, looking around him, beheld the noble pile of the cathedral towering alone above the plain, not as if standing in the midst of a city, but rather as though it rose from a desert. He paused, forgetful of all his sorrows, and contemplated thus at a distance that eighth wonder of the world, of which he had heard so much from his infancy. But turning round, after a moment or two, he beheld along the horizon that

rugged ridge of mountains: he beheld, distinct and elevated among these, his own *Resegone*, and felt his blood curdle within him; then indulging for a few minutes in a mournful look in that direction, he slowly and sadly turned round, and continued his way. By degrees, he began to discern belfries and towers, cupolas and roofs; then descending into the road, he walked forward for a long time; and, when he found that he was near the city, accosted a passenger, and making a low bow, with the best politeness he was master of, said to him, "Will you be kind enough, Signor . . . ?"

"What do you want, my brave youth?"

"Can you direct me the shortest way to the Capuchin Convent where Father Bonaventura lives?"

The person to whom Renzo addressed himself was a wealthy resident in the neighbourhood, who having been that morning to Milan on business, was returning without having done anything, in great haste to reach his home before dark, and therefore quite willing to escape this detention. Nevertheless, without betraying any impatience, he courteously replied: "My good friend, there are many more convents than one; you must tell me more clearly which you are seeking." Renzo then drew from his bosom Father Cristoforo's letter, and showed it to the gentleman, who having read the address; "Porta Orientale," said he, returning it to him; "you are fortunate, young man; the convent you want is not far from hence. Take this narrow street to the left; it is a bye-way; not far off you will come to the corner of a long and low building: this is the Lazaretto; follow the moat that surrounds it, and you will come out at the Porta Orientale. Enter the gate, and three or four hundred yards further, you will see a little square surrounded by fine elms; there is the convent, and you cannot mistake it. God be with you, my brave youth." And, accompanying the last words with a

courteous wave of the hand, he continued his way. Renzo stood surprised and edified at the affable manners of the citizens towards strangers, and knew not that it was an unusual day—a day in which the Spanish cloak had to stoop before the doublet. He followed the path that had been pointed out, and arrived at the Porta Orientale. The reader, however, must not allow the scene now associated with this name to present itself to his mind: the wide and straight street flanked with poplars, outside; the spacious opening between two piles of building, begun, at least, with some pretensions; on first entering those two lateral mounds at the base of the bastions, regularly sloped, levelled at the top, and edged with trees; that garden on one side, and further on, those palaces on the right and left of the principal street of the suburb. When Renzo entered by that gate, the street outside ran straight along the whole length of the Lazzaretto, it being impossible for it, for that distance, to do otherwise; then it continued crooked and narrow between two hedges. The gate consisted of two pillars with a roofing above to protect the door-posts, and on one side a small cottage for the custom-house officers. The bases of the bastions were of irregular steepness, and the pavement was a rough and unequal surface of rubbish and fragments of broken vessels thrown there by chance. The street of the suburb which opened to the view of a person entering the Porta Orientale, bore no bad resemblance to that now facing the entrance of the Porta Tosa. A small ditch ran along the middle, till within a few yards of the gate, and thus divided it into two winding narrow streets, covered with dust or mud, according to the season. At the spot where was, and now is, the little street called the Borghetto, this ditch emptied itself into a sewer, and thence into the other ditch that washes the walls. Here stood a column surmounted by a cross,

called the Column of San Dionigi: on the right and left were gardens enclosed by hedges, and at intervals a few small cottages, inhabited chiefly by washerwomen.



Renzo entered the gate, and pursued his way; none of the custom-house officers spoke to him, which appeared to him the more wonderful, since the few in his country who could boast of having been at Milan, had related marvellous stories of the examinations and interrogations to which all those who entered were subjected. The street was deserted; so much so, that had he not heard a distant buzz indicating some great movement, he would have fancied he was entering a forsaken town. Advancing forward, without knowing what to make of this, he saw on the pavement certain white streaks, as

white as snow; but snow it could not be, since it does not fall in streaks, nor usually at this season. He advanced to one of these, looked at it, touched it, and felt assured that it was flour.—A great abundance, thought he, there must be in Milan, if they scatter in this manner the gifts of God. They gave us to understand that there was a great famine everywhere. See how they go about to make us poor people quiet.—Going a few steps further, and coming up to the column, he saw at its foot a still stranger sight; scattered about on the steps of the pedestal were things which certainly were not stones, and, had they been on a baker's counter, he would not have hesitated a moment to call them loaves. But Renzo would not so readily trust his eyes; because, forsooth! this was not a likely place for bread.—Let us see what these things can be,—said he again to himself; and, going to the column, he stooped down, and took one in his hand: it was really a round, very white loaf, and such as Renzo was unaccustomed to eat, except on holy days.—It is really bread! said he aloud, so great was his astonishment:—is this the way they scatter it in this country? in such a year too? and don't they even give themselves the trouble to pick up what falls? this must be the land of Cuccagna!* After ten miles' walk in the fresh morning air, this bread, when he had recovered his self-possession, aroused his appetite.—Shall I take it? deliberated he: poh! they have left it here to the discretion of dogs, and surely a Christian may taste it. And, after all, if the owner comes forward, I will pay him.—Thus reasoning, he put the loaf he held in his hand into one pocket, took up a second and put it into the other, and a third, which he began to eat, and then proceeded on his way, more uncertain than ever, and longing to have this strange mystery cleared up. Scarcely had he started, when he saw people

* The name of an ideal country, affording all sorts of pleasure.

issuing from the interior of the city, and he stood still to watch those who first appeared. They were a man, a woman, and, a little way behind, a boy: all three carrying a load on their backs which seemed beyond their strength, and all three in a most extraordinary condition. Their dress, or rather their rags, covered with flour, their faces floured, and, at the same time, distorted and much heated; they walked not only as if wearied by their load, but trembling, as if their limbs had been beaten and bruised. The man staggered under the weight of a large sack of flour, which, here and there in holes, scattered a shower around at every stumble, at every disturbance of his equilibrium. But the figure of the woman was still more awkward: an unwieldy bulk, two extended arms which seemed to bear it up with difficulty, and looked like two carved handles from the neck to the widest part of a large kilderkin, and beneath this enormous body, two legs, naked up to the knees, which could scarcely totter along. Renzo gazed steadily at this great bulk, and discovered that it was the woman's gown turned up around her, with as much flour in it as it could hold, and rather more, so that from time to time it was scattered in handfuls over the ground. The boy held with both hands a basket full of bread upon his head; but, from having shorter legs than his parents, he kept falling behind by degrees, and in running forward to overtake them, the basket lost its balance, and a few loaves fell.

"If you let another fall, you vile, helpless" said the mother, gnashing her teeth at the child.

"I don't let them fall; they fall themselves. How can I help it?" replied he.

"Eh! it's well for you that I have my hands engaged," rejoined the woman, shaking her fist, as if she would have given the poor child a blow; and with this movement she sent forth a fresh cloud of flour, enough to

have made more than the two loaves the boy had let fall.

"Come, come," said the man, "we will go back presently to pick them up, or somebody will do it for us: we have been a long while in want: now that we have got a little abundance, let us enjoy it in blessed peace."

In the meantime people arrived from without; and one of them, accosting the woman, "Where must we go to get bread?" asked he. "Forward, forward," was her reply; and when they were a few yards past, she added, muttering, "These blackguard peasants will come and sweep all the bake-houses and magazines, and there will be nothing left for us."

"There's a little for everybody, magpie," said the husband; "plenty, plenty."

From this and similar scenes which Renzo heard and witnessed, he began to gather that he had come to a city in a state of insurrection, and that this was a day of victory; that is to say, when every one helped himself in proportion to his inclination and power, giving blows in payment. However we may desire to make our poor mountaineer appear to the best advantage, yet historical accuracy obliges us to say, that his first feeling was that of satisfaction. He had so little to rejoice at in the ordinary course of things, that he was inclined to approve of anything that might make a change, whatever it might be. And besides, not being a man superior to his age, he entertained the common opinion, or prejudice, that the scarcity of bread was produced by monopolists and bakers; and readily did he esteem every method justifiable of rescuing from their grasp the food, which they, according to this opinion, so cruelly denied to the hunger of a whole people. He resolved, however, to get out of the tumult, and rejoiced at being directed to a Capuchin, who would give him shelter and good advice. Engaged in such thoughts, and looking about him at the

fresh victors who appeared, laden with spoil, he took the short road that still remained to reach the convent.

On the present site of a noble palace, with its beautiful portico, there was formerly, and till within a very few years, a small square, and at the furthest side of this, the church and convent of the Capuchins, with four large elms standing before them. We congratulate, not without envy, those of our readers who have not seen Milan as thus described: that is, because they must be very young, and have not had much time to commit many follies. Renzo went straight to the door, put into his bosom the remaining half loaf, took out his letter and held it ready in his hand, and rang the bell. A small wicket was opened at the summons, and the face of the porter appeared at the grate to ask who was there.

"One from the country, bringing an important letter to Father Bonaventura from Father Cristoforo."

"Give it me," said the porter, putting his hand through the grate.

"No, no," said Renzo, "I must give it into his own hands."

"He is not in the Convent."

"Let me come in, then, and I will wait for him," replied Renzo.

"Follow my advice," rejoined the friar: "go and wait in the church, where you may be employing yourself profitably. You cannot be admitted into the convent at present." So saying, he closed the wicket.

Renzo stood irresolute, with the letter in his hand. He then took a few steps towards the door of the church, to follow the advice of the porter, but thought he would first just give another glance at the stir outside. He crossed the square, reached the side of the road, and stood with his arms crossed on his breast to watch the thickest and most noisy part of the crowd that was issuing from the interior of the city. The vortex

attracted our spectator.—Let us go and see, thought he ; and again taking out the piece of bread, he began to eat, and advanced towards the crowd. While he is walking thither, we will relate, as briefly as possible, the causes and beginnings of this uproar.





CHAPTER XII.

HIS was the second year of the scarcity. In the preceding year, the surplus remaining from former seasons had more or less supplied the deficiency; and the people, neither satiated nor famished, but certainly sufficiently unprovided for, had reached the harvest of 1628, in which our story finds us. Now, this harvest, so long and eagerly looked forward to, proved still less productive than the former, partly on account of the adverse character of the season (and that not only at Milan, but, in great measure, in the surrounding country), and partly by the agency of man. Such were the ravages and havoc of the war—that amiable war to which we have already alluded—that in the parts of the country bordering on

its scene, much more land than usual remained uncultivated and deserted by the peasants, who, instead of working to provide food for themselves and others, were obliged to wander about as beggars. I have said, more than usual, because the insupportable taxes, levied with unequalled cupidity and folly—the habitual conduct, even in perfect peace, of the stationary troops,—conduct which the mournful documents of the age compare to that of an invading enemy—and other reasons, which this is not the place to enumerate, had for some time been producing this sad effect throughout the whole of the Milanese: the particular circumstances, of which we are now speaking, being but the sudden exacerbation of a chronic disease. No sooner had this deficient harvest been gathered in, than the provisions for the army, and the waste which always accompanies them, made such a fearful void in it, that scarcity quickly made itself felt, and with scarcity its melancholy, but profitable, as well as inevitable, effect, a rise of prices.

But when the price of food reaches a certain point, there always arises (at least, hitherto it has always arisen; and if it is so still, after all that has been written by so many learned men, what must it have been in those days!)—there always arises an opinion among the many that it is not the effect of scarcity. They forget that they had foreseen and predicted such an issue; they suddenly fancy that there is plenty of corn, and that the evil proceeds from there not being as much distributed as is required for consumption; propositions sufficiently preposterous, but which flatter both their anger and their hopes. Corn monopolists, either real or imaginary, large landholders, the bakers who purchased corn, all, in short, who had either little or much, or were thought to have any, were charged with being the causes of the scarcity and dearness of provisions; they were the objects of universal complaint, and of the hatred of the

multitude of every rank. The populace could tell with certainty where there were magazines and granaries full and overflowing with corn, and even requiring to be propped up; they indicated most extravagant numbers of sacks; they talked with certainty of the immense quantities of grain secretly despatched to other places, where, probably, it was asserted with equal assurance and equal excitement, that the corn grown there was transported to Milan. They implored from the magistrates those precautions which always appear, or, at least, have always hitherto appeared, so equitable, so simple, so capable of drawing forth the corn which they affirm to be secreted, walled up, or buried, and of restoring to them abundance. The magistrates, therefore, busied themselves in fixing the highest price that was to be charged upon every commodity; in threatening punishment to any one who should refuse to sell; and making other regulations of a similar nature. As, however, all human precautions, how vigorous soever, can neither diminish the necessity of food, nor produce crops out of season; and as these individual precautions offered no very inviting terms to other countries where there might be a superabundance, the evil continued and increased. The multitude attributed such an effect to the scarcity and feebleness of the remedies, and loudly solicited some more spirited and decisive measures. Unfortunately, they found a man after their own heart.

In the absence of the governor, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, who was encamped over Casale del Monferrato, the High Chancellor Antonio Ferrer, also a Spaniard, supplied his place at Milan. This man saw (and who could help seeing it?) that a moderate price on bread is in itself a most desirable thing; and he thought (here was his mistake) that an order from him would suffice to produce it. He fixed the limit (*la meta*, by which name the tariff was distinguished in articles of

food,) at the price that bread would have had, if the corn had been generally sold at thirty-three livres the bushel, and they sold it as high as eighty. He acted like the old woman who thought to make herself young again by changing her baptismal faith.

Regulations less irrational and less unjust had, on more than one occasion, by the resistance of actual circumstances, remained unexecuted; but that this should be carried into effect was undertaken by the multitude, who, seeing their demands at last converted into a law, would not suffer it to be a mere form. They immediately ran to the bake-houses, to demand bread at the fixed price; and they required it with that air of threatening resolution which passion, force, and law united could impart. It need not be asked if the bakers resisted. With sleeves turned up, they were busied in carrying, putting into the oven, and taking out thence, without intermission; for the people, having a confused idea that it was too violent an attempt to last long, besieged the bake-houses incessantly, to enjoy their temporary good fortune; and every reader can imagine what a pleasure it must have been to drudge like a slave, and expose one's self more than usually to an attack of pleurisy, to be, after all, a loser in consequence. But, with magistrates on one side threatening punishments, and the people on the other importunate, murmuring at every delay that was interposed in serving them, and indefinitely menacing some one or other of their chastisements, which are always the worst that are inflicted in this world—there was no help for it; drudge they must; they were forced to empty and replenish their ovens, and sell. However, to keep them up to such employment, it was of little avail to impose strict orders, and keep them in constant fear: it was a question of absolute practicability; and had the thing lasted a little longer, they *could* have done no more. They remon-

strated incessantly against the iniquitous and insupportable weight of the burden laid upon them, and protested they would willingly throw the shovel into the oven, and take their departure; and yet they continued to persevere as they could, longing, hoping, that, some day or other, the High Chancellor would come to his senses. But Antonio Ferrer, who was what would now be called a man of character, replied that the bakers had made enormous profits in past times; that they would make equally great gains in better times to come, that, therefore, it was both reasonable and necessary they should now make some compensation to the public, and that, in the meanwhile, they must get on as they could. Whether he were really convinced of the truth of those reasons he alleged to others, or whether, perceiving, from its effects, the impossibility of maintaining this regulation, he was willing to leave to others the odium of revoking it; for who can now look into Antonio Ferrer's mind? yet certain it is he did not relax one iota of what he had established. At length, the *decurioni* (a municipal magistracy composed of nobles, which lasted till the ninety-sixth year of the last century) informed the Governor, by letter, of the state in which matters stood, hoping he might be able to suggest some remedy.

Don Gonzalo, buried over head in the affairs of war, did what the reader will certainly imagine: he nominated a Council, which he endowed with full authority to fix such a price upon bread as could become current, thus doing justice to both parties. The deputies assembled, or, as it was expressed, after the Spanish fashion, in the jargon of those days, the junta met; and, after a hundred bowings, compliments, preambles, sighs, whisperings, airy propositions, and subterfuges, urged, by a necessity which all felt, to come to some determination, conscious that they were casting an important die, but aware that

there was no other course to be taken, they at length agreed to augment the price of bread. The bakers once more breathed, but the people raved.

The evening preceding the day in which Renzo arrived at Milan, the streets and squares swarmed with men, who, transported with indignation, and swayed by a prevailing opinion, assembled—whether acquaintances or strangers—in knots and parties without any previous concert, and almost without being aware of it, like rain-drops on a hill side. Every conversation increased the general belief, and roused the passions of both hearer and speaker. Amongst the many excited ones, there were some few of cooler temperament, who stood quietly watching with great satisfaction the troubling of the water, who busied themselves in troubling it more and more, with such reasonings and stories as rogues know how to invent, and agitated minds are so ready to believe, and who determined not to let it calm down without first catching a little fish. Thousands went to rest that night with an indeterminate feeling that something must and would be done. Crowds assembled before day-break: children, women, men, old people, workmen, beggars, all grouped together at random; here was a confused whispering of many voices; there, one declaimed to a crowd of applauding bystanders; this one asked his nearest fellow the same question that had just been put to himself; that other repeated the exclamation that he heard resounding in his ears; everywhere were disputes, threats, wonderings; and very few words made up the materials of so many conversations.

There only wanted something to lay hold of: some beginning, some kind of impetus to reduce words to deeds, and this was not long wanting. Towards day-break, little boys issued from the bakers' shops, carrying baskets of bread to the houses of their usual customers.

The first appearance of one of these unlucky boys in a crowd of people, was like the fall of a lighted squib in a gunpowder magazine. "Let us see if there's bread here!" exclaimed a hundred voices, in an instant. "Aye, for the tyrants who roll in abundance, and would let us die of hunger," said one, approaching the boy; and, raising his hand to the edge of the basket, he snatched at it, and exclaimed, "Let me see!" The boy coloured, turned pale, trembled, and tried to say, "Let me go on;" but the words died between his lips, and slackening his arms, he endeavoured to disengage them hastily from the straps.

"Down with the basket!" was the instantaneous cry. Many hands seized it, and brought it to the ground; they then threw the cloth that covered it into the air. A tepid fragrance was diffused around. "We, too, are Christians: we must have bread to eat," said the first. He took out a loaf, and, raising it in the view of the crowd, began to eat: in an instant all hands were in the basket, and in less time than one can relate it, all had disappeared. Those who had got none of the spoil, irritated at the sight of what the others had gained, and animated by the facility of the enterprise, moved off by parties in quest of other straying baskets, which were no sooner met with than they were pillaged immediately. Nor was it necessary to attack the bearers: those who unfortunately were on their way, as soon as they saw which way the wind blew, voluntarily laid down their burdens, and took to their heels. Nevertheless, those who remained without a supply were, beyond comparison, the greater part; nor were the victors half satisfied with such insignificant spoil; and some there were mingled in the crowds who had resolved upon a much better regulated attack. "To the bake-house, to the bake-house!" was the cry.

In the street called *La Corsia de' Servi* was a bake-

house, which is still there, bearing the same name,—a name that, in Tuscan, means “The Bakery of the Crutches,” and, in Milanese, is composed of words so extravagant, so whimsical, so out-of-the-way, that the alphabet of the Italian language does not afford letters to express its sound.* In this direction the crowd advanced. The people of the shop were busy questioning the poor boy who had returned unladen, and he, pale with terror, and greatly discomposed, was unintelligibly relating his unfortunate adventure, when, suddenly, they heard a noise as of a crowd in motion: it increases and approaches; the forerunners of the crowd are in sight.

“Shut, lock up; quick, quick:” one runs to beg assistance from the sheriff; the others hastily shut up the shop, and bolt and bar the doors inside. The multitudes begin to increase without, and the cries redouble of—“Bread! bread! Open! open!”

At this juncture the sheriff arrived, in the midst of a troop of halberdiers. “Make room, make room, my boys; go home, go home: make room for the sheriff!” cried he. The throng, not too much crowded, gave way a little, so that the halberdiers could advance and get close to the door of the shop, though not in a very orderly manner. “But, my friends,” said the sheriff, addressing the people from thence, “what are you doing here? Go home, go home. Where is your fear of God? What will our master the King say? We don’t wish to do you any harm; but go home, like good fellows. What in the world can you do here, in such a crush? There is nothing good to be got here, either for the soul or body. Go home, go home!” But how were those next the speaker, who saw his face and could hear his words, even had they been willing to obey—how were they to accomplish it, urged forward as they were, and

* El prestin di scanse.

almost trampled upon by those behind; who, in their turn, were trodden upon by others, like wave upon wave, and step upon step, to the very edge of the rapidly-increasing throng? The sheriff began to feel a little alarmed. "Make them give way, that I may get a little breath," said he to his halberdiers; "but don't hurt anybody. Let us try to get into the shop. Knock; make them give way!"

"Back! back!" cried the halberdiers, throwing themselves in a body upon their nearest neighbours, and pushing them back with the point of their weapons. The people replied with a grumbling shout, and retreated as they could, dispersing blows on the breast and stomach in profusion, and treading upon the toes of those behind: while such was the general rush, the squeezing and trampling, that those who were in the middle of the throng would have given anything to have been elsewhere. In the meanwhile, a small space was cleared before the house; the sheriff knocked and kicked against the door, calling to those within to open it: these, seeing from the window how things stood, ran down in haste and admitted the sheriff, followed by the halberdiers, who crept in one after another, the last repulsing the crowd with their weapons. When all were secured, they re-bolted the door, and, running up stairs, the sheriff displayed himself at the window. We leave the reader to imagine the outcry!

"My friends!" cried he: many looked up. "My friends! go home. A general pardon to all who go home at once!"

"Bread! bread! Open! open!" were the most conspicuous words in the savage vociferations the crowd sent forth in reply.

"Justice, my friends! take care; you have yet time given you. Come, get away; return to your houses. You shall have bread; but this is not the way to get it.

Eh! . . . eh! what are you doing down there? Eh! at this door? Fie, fie upon you! I see, I see: justice! take care! It is a great crime. I'm coming to you. Eh! eh! away with those irons; down with those hands! Fie! you Milanese, who are talked of all over the world for peaceableness! Listen! listen! you have always been good sub . . . Ah, you rascals!"

This rapid transition of style was caused by a stone, which, coming from the hands of one of these good subjects, struck the forehead of the sheriff, on the left protuberance of his metaphysical profundities. "Rascals! rascals!" continued he, shutting the window in a rage, and retiring from view. But though he had shouted to the extent of the powers of his throat, his words, both good and bad, had vanished and consumed in thin air, repulsed by the cries which came from below. The objects that now, as he afterwards described, presented themselves to his view, were stones and iron bars, (the first they could lay hold of by the way,) with which they tried to force open the doors and windows; and they already had made considerable progress in their work.

In the meantime, the masters and shop-boys appeared at the upper windows, armed with stones, (they had probably unpaved the yard,) and crying out to those below, with horrible looks and gestures, to let them alone, they showed their weapons, and threatened to let fly among them. Seeing that nothing else would avail, they began to throw at them in reality. Not one fell in vain, since the press was such that even a grain of corn, as the saying was, could not have reached the ground.

"Ah! you great vagabonds! you great villains! Is this the bread you give to poor people? Ah! alas! oh! Now, now, at us?" was raised from below. More than one was injured, and two boys were killed. Fury increased the strength of the people; the doors and bars gave way; and the crowd poured into the passages in

torrents. Those within, perceiving their danger, took refuge in the garrets: the sheriff, the halberdiers, and a few of the household gathered together here in a corner, under the slates; and others, escaping by the sky-lights, wandered about on the roof like eats.

The sight of the spoil made the victors forget their designs of sanguinary vengeance. They flew upon the large chests, and instantly pillaged them. Others, instead, hastened to tear open the counter, seized the tills, took out by handfuls, pocketed and set off with, the money, to return for bread afterwards, if there remained any. The crowd dispersed themselves through the interior magazines. Some laid hold of the sacks and drew them out; others turned them wrong side upwards, and untying the mouth, to reduce them to a weight which they could manage to carry, shook out some of the flour; others crying out, "Stay, stay!" came underneath to prevent this waste, by catching it in their clothes and aprons; others, again, fell upon a kneading-trough, and seized the dough, which ran over their hands and escaped their grasp on every side: here, one who had snatched up a meal-sieve, came brandishing it in the air. Some come, some go, some handle: men, women, children, swarm around; pushes, blows, and cries are bandied about; and a white powder that rises in clouds and deposits itself in every direction, involves the whole proceeding in a thick mist. Outside, is a crowd composed of two reverse processions, which alternately separate and intermingle, some going out with their prey, others entering to share the spoil.

While this bake-house was being thus plundered, none of the others were quiet and free from danger; but at none had the people assembled in such numbers as to be very daring. In some, the masters had collected a few auxiliaries, and stood upon their defence: others, less strong in numbers, or more terrified, came to some

kind of agreement; they distributed bread to those who had begun to crowd around their shops, if they would be content with this and go away. Those who did withdraw, did so not so much because they were contented with their acquisitions, as because the halberdiers and police, keeping at a distance from the tremendous scene at the Bake-house of the Crutches, appeared, nevertheless, elsewhere in sufficient force to keep in awe these smaller parties of mutineers. By this means, the confusion and concourse continued to augment at this first unfortunate bake-house; for all those whose fingers itched to be at work, and whose hearts were set upon doing some great deed, repaired thither, where their friends were in greatest numbers, and impunity was secure.

Such was the state of things, when Renzo, finishing, as we have related, his piece of bread, came to the suburb of the Porta Orientale, and set off, without being aware of it, exactly to the central scene of the tumult. He continued his way, now urged forward, now hindered, by the crowd; and as he walked, he watched and listened, to gather from the confused murmur of voices some more positive information of the state of things. The following are nearly the words he caught on his way.

"Now," said one, "the infamous imposture of these villains is discovered, who said that there was no more bread, nor flour, nor corn. Now we see things clearly and distinctly, and they can no longer deceive us as they have done. Hurrah for plenty!"

"I tell you all this just goes for nothing," said another; "it is only like making a hole in water; so that it will be the worse for us, if we don't get full justice done us. Bread will be sold at a low price: but they will put poison in it to kill us poor people like flies. They've said already that we are too many: they said so in the council; and I know it for certain, because I heard it

with these ears from an acquaintance of mine, who is the friend of a relation of a scullion of one of these lords."

"They are not things to be laughed at," said another poor wretch, who was foaming at the mouth, and holding up to his bleeding head a ragged pocket handkerchief; some neighbour, by way of consolation, echoing his remark.

"Make way, gentlemen: pray be good enough to make way for a poor father of a family, who is carrying something to eat to five famished children." These were the words of one who came staggering under the weight of a large sack of flour; and everybody instantly drew back to attend to his request.

"I," said another, almost in an under tone, to his companion, "I shall take my departure. I am a man of the world, and I know how these things go. These clowns who now make so much noise, to-morrow or next day will be shut up in their houses, cowering with fear. I have already noticed some faces, some worthy fellows, who are going about as spies, and taking note of those who are here and not here; and when all is over they will render in an account, and bring punishment on those who deserve it."

"He who protects the bakers," cried a sonorous voice, which attracted Renzo's attention, "is the superintendent of provisions."

"They are all rascals," said a by-stander.

"Yes; but he is at the head of them," replied the first.

The superintendent of provisions, elected every year by the governor, from a list of six nobles, formed by the council of *decurioni*, was the president of this council, as well as of the court of provisions, which, composed of twelve noblemen, had, together with other duties, that of overlooking the distribution of corn in the city. The

person who occupied this post must, necessarily, in times of scarcity and ignorance, have been regarded as the author of the evil, unless he had acted like Ferrer—a course which was not in his power, even had the idea entered his mind.

“Rascals!” exclaimed another: “could they do worse? They have actually dared to say that the high chancellor is an old fool, to rob him of his credit, and get the government into their own hands. We ought to make a large hen-coop, and put them in, to live upon vetches and cockle-weed, as they would treat us.”

“Bread, eh!” said one who was making as great haste as he could. “Bread? Blows with stones of a pound weight—stones falling plump, that came down like hail. And such breaking of ribs! I long to be at my own house.”

Among such sentences as these, by which it is difficult to say whether he were more informed or perplexed, and among numberless knocks and pushes, Renzo at last arrived opposite the bakehouse. The crowds here had considerably dispersed, so that he could contemplate the dismal scene of recent confusion—the walls unplastered and defaced with stones and bricks, the windows broken, and the door destroyed.

“These are no very fine doings,” thought Renzo to himself: “if they treat all the bake-houses in this way, where will they make bread? In the ditches?”

From time to time somebody would issue from the house, carrying part of a bin, of a tub, or of a bolting-hutch, the pole of a kneading instrument, a bench, a basket, a journal, a waste-book, or something belonging to this unfortunate bake-house; and shouting “Make room, make room,” would pass on through the crowd. All these, he observed, went in the same direction, and to some fixed place. Renzo, determined to find out the meaning of this procedure, followed behind a man who,

having tied together a bundle of broken planks and chips, carried it off on his back, and, like the others, took the road that runs along the northern side of the cathedral, and receives its name from the flight of steps which was then in existence, and has only lately been removed. The wish of observing what happened, did not prevent our mountaineer, on arriving in sight of this noble pile, from stopping to gaze upwards, with open



mouth. He then quickened his pace to overtake his self-chosen guide; and, on turning the corner, gave another glance at the front of the building, at that time in a rude and far-from-finished state, keeping all the while close behind his leader, who advanced towards the middle of the square. The crowds became more dense

as he went forward, but they made way for the carrier ; and while he cleft the waves of people, Renzo, following in his wake, arrived with him in the very centre of the throng. Here was a space, and in the midst a bonfire, a heap of embers, the relics of the implements before mentioned. Around, the people were dancing and clapping their hands, mingling in the uproar a thousand shouts of triumph and imprecation.

The man with the bundle upset it into the embers ; others, with a long half-burnt pole, gathered them up and raked them together from the sides and underneath : the smoke increased and thickened, the flame again burst forth, and with it, the redoubled cries of the by-standers : " Hurrah for plenty ! Death to those who would starve us ! Away with the famine ! Perish the Court of Provision ! Perish the junta ! Hurrah for plenty ! Hurrah for bread ! "

To say the truth, the destruction of sieves and kneading-troughs, the pillaging of bake-houses, and the routing of bakers, are not the most expeditious means of providing a supply of bread ; but this is one of those metaphysical subtleties which never enter the mind of the multitude. Renzo, without being of too metaphysical a turn, yet not being in such a state of excitement as the others, could not avoid making this reflection in his mind ; he kept it, however, to himself, for this, among other reasons : because, out of so many faces, there was not one that seemed to say, " My friend, if I am wrong, correct me, and I shall be indebted to you. "

The flame had again sunk ; no one was seen approaching with fresh combustibles, and the crowd was beginning to feel impatient, when a rumour was spread that at the *Cordusio* (a small square or cross-way not far distant,) they had laid siege to a bake-house. In similar circumstances, the announcement of an event very often produces it. Together with this rumour, a general wish

to repair thither gained ground among the multitude: "I am going; are you going? Let us go, let us go!" were heard in every direction; the crowd broke up, were set in motion, and moved on. Renzo remained behind, almost stationary, except when dragged forward by the torrent; and in the meanwhile held counsel with himself, whether he should make his escape from the stir, and return to the convent in search of Father Bonaventura, or go and see this affray too. Curiosity prevailed. He resolved, however, not to mingle in the thickest of the crowd, at the risk of broken bones, or something worse; but to keep at a distance and watch. Having determined on his plans, and finding himself tolerably unobserved, he took out the second roll, and, biting off a mouthful, moved forward in the rear of the tumultuous body.

By the outlet at one corner of the square, the multitude had already entered the short and narrow street *Pescheria vecchia*,* and thence, through the crooked archway, into the *Piazza de' Mercanti*.† Very few were there who, in passing the niche which divides, about the centre, the terrace of the edifice then called the College of Doctors, did not cast a slight glance upwards at the great statue that adorns it—at that serious, surly, frowning, morose countenance of Don Filippo II., which, even in marble, enforces a feeling of respect, and seems ready to say, "I am here, you rabble!"

This niche is now empty, by a singular accident. About a hundred and seventy years after the events we are now relating, one morning, the head of the statue that stood there was exchanged, the sceptre was taken out of his hand, and a dagger placed there instead, and on the statue was inscribed the name of Marcus Brutus.

* The Old Fish Market.

† The Square of the Merchants.

Thus adorned, it remained, perhaps, a couple of years ; but, one morning, some persons who had no sympathies with Marcus Brutus, and who must even have borne him a secret grudge, threw a rope around the statue, tore it down, and bestowed upon it a hundred injuries ; thus mangled, and reduced to a shapeless trunk, they dragged it along, with a profuse accompaniment of epithets, through the streets, and when they were well tired, threw it—no one knows where. Who would have foretold this to Andrea Biffi, when he sculptured it ?

From the square of the *Mercanti* the clamorous multitude turned into the by-street *de' Fustagnai*, whence they poured into the *Cordusio*. Every one, immediately on entering the square, turned their eyes towards the bake-house that had been indicated to them. But, instead of the crowd of friends whom they expected to find already at work, they saw only a few, irresolutely hovering about at some distance from the shop, which was fastened up, and protected by armed men at the windows, who gave tokens of a determination to defend themselves in case of need. They, therefore, turned back and paused, to inform those who were coming up, and see what course the others would wish to take ; some returned, or remained behind. There was a general retreat and detention, asking and answering of questions, a kind of stagnation, signs of irresolution, then a general murmur of consultation. At this moment an ill-omened voice was heard in the midst of the crowd : “ The house of the superintendent of provisions is close by ; let us go and get justice, and lay siege to it.” It seemed rather the common recollection of an agreement already concluded, than the acceptance of a proposal. “ To the superintendent’s ! to the superintendent’s ! ” was the only cry that could be heard. The crowd moved forward with unanimous fury towards the street where the house, named at such an ill-fated moment, was situated.



CHAPTER XIII.

HE unfortunate superintendent was at this moment digesting a poor and scanty dinner, unwillingly eaten with a little stale bread, and awaiting, with much suspense, the termination of this storm, far from suspecting that it was about to fall with such violence upon his own head. Some benevolent person preceded the crowd in urgent haste, and entered the house to warn him of his pressing danger. The servants, already attracted to the door by the noise, were looking with much alarm up the street, in the direction of the approaching tumult. While listening to the warning, the vanguard came in sight; they ran in haste and terror to inform their master, and while he was deliberating whether he should

fly, and how he should accomplish it, some one else arrived to tell him there was no longer time for flight. Scarcely was there time for the servants to secure the door. They, however, barred and locked it, and then ran to fasten the windows, as when a violent storm is threatening, and the hail is expected to come down every moment. The increasing howls of the people, falling like a thunder-clap, resounded through the empty yard; every corner of the house re-echoed it: and in the midst of the tremendous and mingled uproar, were heard, loudly and repeatedly, the blows of stones upon the door.

“The superintendent! The tyrant! The fellow who would starve us! We’ll have him, dead or alive!”

The poor man wandered from room to room, pale, and almost breathless with terror, striking his hands together, commending himself to God, and imploring his servants to stand firm, and find him some way of making his escape. But how, and where? He ascended to the garret, and there, through an aperture between the ceiling and the tiles, looked anxiously into the street, and saw it swarming with the enraged populace; more terrified than ever, he then withdrew to seek the most secure and secret hiding-place he could find. Here he crouched down and listened whether the awful burst of fury would ever subside, and the tumult ever abate; but hearing that the uproar rather became more savage and outrageous, and the blows against the door more rapidly repeated, his heart sank within him, and he hastily stopped his ears. Then, as if beside himself, gnashing his teeth and distorting his countenance, he impetuously extended his arms, and shook his fists, as if he would keep the door secure spite of all the pushes and blows. At last, in absolute despair, he sank down upon the floor, and remained terrified and almost insensible, expecting his death.

Renzo found himself this time in the thickest of the

confusion, not now carried there by the throng, but by his own deliberate will. At the first proposal of bloodshedding, he felt his own curdle within him; as to the plundering, he had not exactly determined whether, in this instance, it were right or wrong; but the idea of murder aroused in him immediate and unfeigned horror. And although, by that fatal submission of excited minds to the excited affirmations of the many, he felt as fully persuaded that the superintendent was an oppressive villain, as if he had known, with certainty and minuteness, all that the unhappy man had done, omitted, and thought; yet he had advanced among the foremost, with a determined intention of doing his best to save him. With this resolution, he had arrived close to the door, which was assailed in a hundred ways. Some, with flints, were hammering at the nails of the lock to break it open; others, with stakes, chisels, and hammers, set to work with more method and regularity. Others, again, with sharp stones, blunted knives, broken pieces of iron, nails, and even their finger-nails, if they had nothing else, pulled down the plaster and defaced the walls, and laboured hard to loosen the bricks by degrees, so as to make a breach. Those who could not lend a hand, encouraged the others by their cries; but, at the same time, by the pressure of their persons they contributed to impede the work already considerably obstructed by the disorderly contentions of the workers: for, by the favour of Heaven, it sometimes happens in evil undertakings, as too often in good, that the most ardent abettors of a work become its greatest impediments.

The first magistrates who had notice of the insurrection immediately sent off to the commander of the castle, which then bore the name of *Porta Giovia*, for the assistance of some troops; and he quickly despatched a band of men. But what with the information, and the orders, and the assembling, and getting on their way, and their

march, the troops did not arrive till the house was completely surrounded by an immense army of besiegers, and they, therefore, halted at a sufficient distance from it, at the extremity of the crowd. The officer who commanded them knew not what course to pursue. Here was nothing but an assembly of idle and unarmed people, of every age and both sexes. On orders being given to disperse and make way, they replied by a deep and prolonged murmur; but no one moved. To fire down upon the crowd seemed to the officer not only a cruel, but a dangerous, course, which, while it offended the less formidable, would irritate the more violent: besides, he had received no such instructions. To push through this first assembly, overthrow them right and left, and go forward to carry war where it was given, would have been the best; but how to succeed was the point. Who knew whether the soldiers would be able to proceed, united and in order? For if, instead of breaking through the crowd, they should be routed on entering, they would be left to the mercy of the people, after having exasperated them. The irresolution of the commander, and the inactivity of the soldiers, appeared, whether justly or not, to proceed from fear. Those who stood next to them contented themselves with looking them in the face with an air, as the Milanese say, of *I-don't-care-for-you*; those who stood a little farther off, could not refrain from provoking them, by making faces at them, and by cries of mockery; further on, few knew or cared who was there; the spoilers continued to batter the wall, without any other thought than of succeeding quickly in their undertaking; the spectators ceased not to animate them with shouts.

Amongst these appeared one, who was himself a spectacle, an old and half-starved man, who, rolling about two sunken and fiery eyes, composing his wrinkled face to a smile of diabolical complacency, and with his hands

raised above his infamous, hoary head, was brandishing in the air a hammer, a rope, and four large nails, with which he said he meant to nail the vicar to the posts of his own door, alive as he was.

“Fie upon you! for shame!” burst forth from Renzo, horrified at such words, and at the sight of so many faces betokening approbation of them; at the same time encouraged by seeing others, who, although silent, betrayed in their countenances the same horror that he felt. “For shame! Would you take the executioner’s business out of his hand? Murder a Christian! How can you expect that God will give us food, if we do such wicked things? He will send us thunder-bolts instead of bread!”

“Ah, dog! traitor to his country!” cried one of those who could hear, in the uproar, these sacred words, turning to Renzo, with a diabolical countenance. “Wait, wait! He is a servant of the superintendent’s, dressed like a peasant; he is a spy; give it him! give it him!” A hundred voices echoed the cry. “What is it? where is he? who is he?—A servant of the superintendent!—A spy!—The superintendent disguised as a peasant, and making his escape!—Where is he? where is he? give it him! give it him!”

Renzo became dumb, shrank into a mere nothing, and endeavoured to make his escape; some of his neighbours helped him to conceal himself, and, by louder and different cries, attempted to drown these adverse and homicidal shouts. But what was of more use to him than anything else, was a cry of “Make way, make way!” which was heard close at hand: “Make way! here is help: make way; ho, hey!”

What was it? It was a long ladder, that some persons were bringing to rear against the house, so as to gain an entrance through one of the windows. But by great good fortune this means, which would have rendered

the thing easy, was not, in itself, so easy of execution. The bearers, who at each end, and here and there at intervals supported it, pushed about and impeded by the crowd, reeled to and fro like waves; one, with his head between two steps and the sides resting on his shoulders, groaned beneath the weight, as under a galling yoke; another was separated from his burden by a violent push; the abandoned machine bruised heads, shoulders, and arms: and the reader must imagine the complaints and murmurs of those who thus suffered. Others, raising the dead weight with their hands, crept underneath it, and carried it on their backs, crying, "It is our turn; let us go!" The fatal machine advanced by bounds and exchanges—now straightforward, now obliquely. It came, however, in time to distract and divert the attention of Renzo's persecutors, and he profited by this confusion within confusion; creeping quietly along at first, and then, elbowing his way as well as he could, he withdrew from the post where he found himself in such a perilous situation, with the intention of making the best of his escape from the tumult, and of going, in real earnest, to find or to wait for Father Bonaventura.

All on a sudden, a movement, begun at one extremity, extended itself throughout the crowd, and a cry was echoed from mouth to mouth, in chorus: "Ferrer! Ferrer!" Surprise, expressions of favour or contempt, joy and anger, burst forth wherever the name was heard: some echoed it, some tried to drown it; some affirmed, some denied, some blessed, some cursed.

"Is Ferrer here?—It isn't true, it isn't true!—Yes, yes! long live Ferrer; he who gives bread at a low price!—No, no!—He's here, he's here, in his carriage.—What is this fellow going to do? Why does he meddle in it? We don't want anybody!—Ferrer! long live Ferrer! the friend of poor people! he's come to take the super-

intendent to prison.—No, no: we will get justice ourselves: back, back!—Yes, yes! Ferrer! let Ferrer come! off with the superintendent to prison!”

And everybody, standing on tiptoe, turned towards the part where the unexpected new arrival was announced. But everybody rising, they saw neither more nor less than if they had all remained standing as they were; yet so it was: all arose.

In fact, at the extremity of the crowd, on the opposite side to where the soldiers were stationed, Antonio Ferrer, the high chancellor, was approaching in his carriage; feeling conscious, probably, that by his mistakes and obstinacy, he was the cause, or, at any rate, the occasion, of this outbreak, he now came to try and allay it, and to avert, at least, the most terrible and irreparable effects: he came, in short, to employ worthily a popularity unworthily acquired.

In popular tumults there is always a certain number of men, who, either from overheated passions, or from fanatical persuasion, or from wicked designs, or from an execrable love of destruction, do all they can to push matters to the worst; they propose or second the most inhuman advice, and fan the flame whenever it seems to be sinking: nothing is ever too much for them, and they wish for nothing so much as that the tumult should have neither limits nor end. But, by way of counterpoise, there is always a certain number of very different men, who, perhaps, with equal ardour and equal perseverance, are aiming at a contrary effect: some influenced by friendship or partiality for the threatened objects; others, without further impulse than that of a pious and spontaneous horror of bloodshed and atrocious deeds. Heaven blesses such. In each of these two opposite parties, even without antecedent concert, conformity of inclination creates an instantaneous agreement in operation. Those who make up the mass, and almost the

materials of the tumult besides, are a mixed body of men, who, more or less, by infinite gradations, hold to one or the other extreme: partly incensed, partly knavish, a little inclined to a sort of justice, according to their idea of the word, a little desirous of witnessing some grand act of villainy; prone to ferocity or compassion, to adoration or execration, according as opportunities present themselves of indulging to the full one or other of these sentiments; craving every moment to know, to believe, some gross absurdity or improbability, and longing to shout, applaud, or revile in somebody's train. "Long live," and "Down with," are the words most readily uttered; and he who has succeeded in persuading them that such an one does not deserve to be quartered, has need of very few words to convince them that he deserves to be carried in triumph: actors, spectators, instruments, obstacles, whichever way the wind blows; ready even to be silent, when there is no longer any one to give them the word; to desist, when instigators fail; to disperse, when many concordant and uncontradicted voices have pronounced, "Let us go;" and to return to their own homes, demanding of each other—What has happened? Since, however, this body has, hence, the greatest power, nay, is, in fact, the power itself; so, each of the two active parties uses every endeavour to bring it to its own side, to engross its services: they are, as it were, two adverse spirits, struggling which shall get possession of, and animate, this huge body. It depends upon which side can diffuse a cry the most apt to excite the passions, and direct their motions in favour of its own schemes; can most seasonably find information which will arouse or allay their indignation, and excite either their terror or their hopes; and can give the word, which, repeated more and more vehemently, will at once express, attest, and create the vote of the majority in favour of one or the other party.

All these remarks are intended as an introduction to the information that, in the struggle of the two parties who were contending for the suffrages of the populace crowded around the house of the superintendent, the appearance of Antonio Ferrer instantly gave a great advantage to the more moderate side, which had evidently been kept in awe, and, had the succour been a little longer delayed, would have had neither power nor scope for combat. This person was acceptable to the multitude on account of the tariff of his own appointment, which had been so favourable to purchasers, and also for his heroic resistance to every argument on the contrary side. Minds already thus biassed were now more than ever captivated by the bold confidence of the old man, who, without guards or retinue, ventured thus to seek and confront an angry and ungoverned multitude. The announcement also that he came to take the superintendent prisoner produced a wonderful effect: so that the fury entertained towards the unfortunate man, which would have been rendered more violent, whoever had come to oppose it without making any concessions, was now, with this promise of satisfaction, and, to use a Milanese expression, with this bone in their mouth, a little allayed, and made way for other and far different sentiments which pervaded the minds of the greater part of the crowd.

The favourers of peace, having recovered their breath, seconded Ferrer in a hundred ways: those who were next to him, by exciting and re-exciting the cries of general applause by their own, and endeavouring at the same time to repulse the people so as to make a clear passage for the carriage; the others, by applauding, repeating, and spreading his words, or what appeared to them the best he could utter, by silencing the furious and obstinate, and turning against them the new passions of the fickle assembly. "Who is there that won't

say, 'Long live Ferrer?' Don't you wish bread to be sold cheap, eh? They are all rascals who don't wish for justice like Christians: they want to make as much noise as they can, to let the vicar escape. To prison with the vicar! Long live Ferrer! Make room for Ferrer!" As those who talked in this strain continued to increase, the courage of the opposite party rapidly cooled; so that the former proceeded from reprimands so far as to lay hands upon the demolishers, to repulse them, and even to snatch the weapons from their grasp. These grumbled, threatened, and endeavoured to regain their implements; but the cause of blood had given way, and the predominating cries were—"Prison! Justice! Ferrer!" After a little struggle, they were driven back: the others possessed themselves of the door, both to defend it from further assaults, and to secure access for Ferrer; and some of them, calling to those within (apertures for such a purpose were not wanting) informed them of the assistance that had arrived, and bid them get the superintendent ready, "to go directly . . . to prison, ehem, do you hear!"

"Is this the Ferrer who helps to make out proclamations?" demanded our friend, Renzo, of a new neighbour, remembering the *Vidit Ferrer* that the doctor had pointed out to him at the bottom of one of these edicts, and which he had resounded so perseveringly in his ears.

"Yes; the high chancellor," was the reply.

"He is a worthy man, isn't he?"

"More than that! it is he who had fixed bread at a low price; and they wouldn't have it so; and now he is come to take the superintendent prisoner, who has not dealt justice to us."

It is unnecessary to say that Renzo was instantly for Ferrer. He wished to get a sight of him directly, but this was no easy matter; yet, with the help of sundry breastings and elbowings, like a true Alpine, he suc-

ceeded in forcing a passage and reaching the foremost ranks next to the side of the earriage.

The vehiele had proceeded a little way into the crowd, and was at this moment at a stand-still, by one of those inevitable impediments so frequent in a journey of this sort. The aged Ferrer presented himself now at one window of the earriage, now at another, with a countenance full of humility, affability, and benevolence—a countenance which he had always reserved, perchance he should ever have an interview with Don Filippo IV.; but he was compelled to display it also on this occasion. He talked too; but the noise and murmur of so many voices, and the *Long lives* which were addressed to him, allowed only few of his words to be heard. He therefore had recourse to gestures, now laying his fingers on his lips to receive a kiss, which his hands, on quickly extending them, distributed right and left, as an acknowledgment of thanks for these public demonstrations of kindness; now spreading them and waving them slowly outside the windows to beg a little room; now politely lowering them to request a moment's silence. When he had partly succeeded in obtaining it, the nearest to the earriage heard and repeated his words: "Bread, abundance: I come to give you justice: a little room, if you please." Then overcome, and, as it were, smothered with the buzzing of so many voices, the sight of so many crowded faces, and the consciousness of so many eyes fixed upon him, he drew back for a moment, puffed out his cheeks, sent forth a long-drawn breath, and said to himself, *Por mi vida, que de gente!* *

"Long live Ferrer! Don't be afraid. You are a worthy man. Bread, bread!"

"Yes: bread, bread," replied Ferrer; "abundance; I promise you," and he laid his hand on his heart. "A

* Upon my life, what a crowd!

little room," added he, in his loudest voice: "I am coming to take him to prison, and give him just punishment:" continuing, in an under tone, "*si està culpable.*"* Then bending forward towards the coachman, he said, hastily, "*Adelante, Pedro, si puedes.*" †

The driver himself also smiled with gracious condescension on the multitudes, as if he were some great personage; and, with ineffable politeness, waved his whip slowly to the right and left, to beg his incommodious neighbours to restrain themselves, and retire a little on either side. "Be good enough, gentlemen," said he, at last, "to make a little room, a very little; just enough to let us pass."

The most active and benevolent now exerted themselves to make the passage so courteously requested; some before the horses made the people retire by civil words, by putting their hands on their breasts, and by sundry gentle pushes: "There, there, a little room, gentlemen." Others pursued the same plan at the sides of the carriage, so that it might proceed without crushing toes, or infringing upon mustachios; for, besides injury to others, these accidents would expose the reputation of Antonio Ferrer to great risk.

After having stood a few moments admiring the behaviour of the old man, who, though agitated by perplexity and overcome with fatigue, was yet animated with solieitude, and adorned, so to say, with the hope of reseuing a fellow-creature from mortal anguish, Renzo put aside every thought of going away, and resolved to lend a hand to Ferrer, and not to leave him until he had obtained his purpose. No sooner said than done; he joined with the rest in endeavouring to clear a passage, and certainly was not among the least efficient. A space was cleared: "Now come forward," said more

* If he be guilty.

† Go on, Peter, if you can.

than one, to the coachman, retiring or going before to make room further on. "*Adelante, presto, con juicio,*"* said his master, and the carriage moved on. Ferrer, in the midst of salutations which he lavished at random on the multitude, returned many particular acknowledgments with a smile of marked notice, to those whom he saw interesting themselves for him; and of these smiles more than one fell to Renzo's share, who indeed merited them, and rendered more assistance to the high chancellor that day than the bravest of his secretaries could have done. The young mountaineer, delighted with these marks of distinction, almost fancied he had made acquaintance with Antonio Ferrer.

The carriage, once more on its way, continued to advance, more or less slowly, and not without some further trifling delays. The distance to be traversed was not perhaps above a stone's-throw; but with respect to the time it occupied, it might have appeared a little journey even to one who was not in such urgent haste as Ferrer. The crowds moved onward, before, behind, and on each side of the carriage, like the mighty billows around a vessel advancing through the midst of a storm. The noise was more shrill, more discordant, more stunning, even than the whistling and howling of a storm itself. Ferrer, looking out first at one side and then at the other, beckoning and making all sorts of gestures to the people, endeavoured to catch something to which he might accommodate his replies; he tried as well as he could to hold a little dialogue with this crowd of friends; but it was a difficult task, the most difficult, perhaps, that he had yet met with during so many years of his high-chancellorship. From time to time, however, a single word, or occasionally some broken sentence, repeated by a group in his passage, made itself

* Forward, quickly, but carefully.

heard, as the report of a large squib is heard above the continued crackling and whizzing of a display of fireworks. Now endeavouring to give a satisfactory answer to these cries, now loudly ejaculating the words that he knew would be most acceptable, or that some instant necessity seemed to require, he, too, continued to talk the whole way. "Yes, gentlemen; bread, abundance—I will conduct him to prison: he shall be punished—*si està culpable*. Yes, yes: I will command: bread at a low price. *A si es . . .* So it is, I mean to say: the King our master would not wish such faithful subjects to suffer from hunger. *Ox! ox! guardaos*: take care we don't hurt you, gentlemen. *Pedro, adelante, con juicio*. Plenty, plenty. A little room, for pity's sake. Bread, bread. To prison, to prison. What?" then demanded he of one who had thrust half his body through the window to shout in his ear some advice or petition or applause, or whatever it might be. But he, without having time to hear the "what?" was forcibly pulled back by one who saw him on the point of being run over by the wheels. With such speeches and replies, amongst incessant acclamations, and some few grumbles of opposition, which were distinguishable here and there, but were quickly silenced, Ferrer at last reached the house, principally by the aid of these good auxiliaries.

The rest, who, as we have before related, were already here with the same good intentions, had in the meanwhile laboured to make and maintain a clear space. They begged, exhorted, threatened; and stamping, trampling, and pacing up and down, with that increased ardour and renewed strength which the near approach of a desired result usually excites, had succeeded in dividing the crowd into two, and then in repressing the two parties, so that when the carriage stopped before the door, there was left between it and the house a small empty space. Renzo, who, by acting a little both as a

scout and guide, had arrived with the carriage, managed to place himself in one of the two frontiers of worthy people, who served at once both as wings to the carriage, and as a rampart to the too eager crowd of gazing bystanders. And helping to restrain one of these with his own powerful shoulders, he was also conveniently placed for seeing.

Ferrer drew a long deep breath on perceiving this small open space, and the door still shut. "Shut," here means not open; for, as to the rest, the hinges were almost wrenched out of the pillars; the door-posts shivered to pieces, crushed, forced, and dissevered; and through a large hole in the door might be seen a piece of a chain, twisted, bent, and almost broken in two, which, if we may say so, still held them together. Some kind-hearted person had placed himself at this opening to call to those within; another ran to let down the steps of the carriage: the old man rose, put out his head, and laying his right hand on the arm of this worthy assistant, came out and stood on the top step.

The crowd on each side stretched themselves up to see him: a thousand faces, a thousand beards pressed forward; and the general curiosity and attention produced a moment of general silence. Ferrer, standing for that moment on the step, cast a glance around, saluted the people with a bow, as if from a rostrum, and laying his left hand on his heart, cried: "Bread and justice;" then bold, upright, and in his robes, he descended amidst acclamations which rent the skies.

Those within had, in the meanwhile, opened the door, or, to speak more correctly, had finished the work of wresting out the chain, together with the already more than half-loosened staples. They made an opening, to admit so ardently-desired a guest, taking, however, great care to limit the aperture to a space that his person would occupy. "Quick, quick," said he: "open it

wide, and let me in : and you, like brave fellows, keep back the people ; don't let them follow me, for Heaven's sake ! Make ready a passage, for by and bye . . . Eh ! eh ! gentlemen, one moment," said he to those within : " softly with this door, let me pass : oh ! my ribs : take care of my ribs. Shut it now : no, eh ! eh ! my gown, my gown ! " It would have remained caught in the door, if Ferrer had not dexterously withdrawn the train, which disappeared from the outside like the tail of a snake that slips into a hiding-place when pursued.

The door pushed to, and closed as it best could be, was then propped up with bars within. Outside, those who constituted themselves Ferrer's body-guard laboured with shoulders, arms, and cries, to keep the space clear, praying from the bottom of their hearts that he would be expeditious.

" Be quick, be quick," said he, also, as he stood within the portico, to the servants who had gathered round him, and who, almost out of breath, were exclaiming : " Blessings on you ! ah, your excellency ! oh, your excellency ! uh, your excellency ! "

" Quick, quick," repeated Ferrer : " where is this poor man ? "

The superintendent came down stairs, half dragged along, and half carried by his servants, as white as a sheet. When he saw his kind helper, he once more breathed freely ; his pulse again beat, a little life returned into his limbs, and a little colour into his cheeks : he hastened towards Ferrer, saying, " I am in the hands of God and your Excellency. But how shall we get out of this house ? It is surrounded by the mob, who desire my death. "

" *Venga con migo usted*,* and be of good courage : my carriage is outside ; quick, quick ! " And taking his

* Come with me, sir.

hand, he led him towards the door, doing his best to encourage him: but in his heart thinking, *Aqui está el busillis! Dios nos valga!**

The door opened; Ferrer led the way, followed by his companion, who, creeping along, clung to the toga of his deliverer, like a little child to its mother's gown. Those who had kept the space clear, now raised their hands and hats so as to form a kind of net or cloud to screen the superintendent from the perilous gaze of the populace, and allow him to enter the carriage, where he concealed himself, by crouching in a corner. Ferrer then got in, and the door was shut. The people knew or guessed what had happened, and sent forth a confused shout of applauses and imprecations.

It may seem that the most difficult and hazardous part of the journey still remained to be performed; but the public desire of letting the superintendent be carried to prison, was sufficiently evident; and during the stay of the chancellor in the house, many of those who had facilitated his arrival had so busied themselves in preparing and maintaining a passage through the midst of the crowd, that on its return the carriage could proceed at a quicker pace, and without further delays. As fast as it advanced, the two crowds, repelled on both sides, fell back and mingled again behind it.

As soon as Ferrer had seated himself, he bent down, and advised the vicar to keep himself well concealed in the corner, and not show himself for Heaven's sake; but there was no necessity for this warning. He, on the contrary, was obliged to display himself at the window, to attract and engage the attention of the multitude: and through the whole course of this drive he was occupied, as before, in making, to his changeable audience, the most lengthened and most unconnected

* Here is the difficult point! God help us!

harangue that ever was uttered; only interrupting it occasionally with some Spanish word or two, which he turned to whisper hastily in the ear of his squatting companion. "Yes, gentlemen, bread and justice. To the castle, to prison, under my guard. Thank you, thank you; a thousand thanks. No, no; he shall not escape! *Por ablandarlos*.* It is too just; we will examine, we will see. I also wish you well, gentlemen. A severe punishment. *Esto lo digo por su bien*.† A just tariff, a fair limit, and punishment to those who would starve you. Stand aside, I beg of you.—Yes, yes, I am an honest man, a friend of the people. He shall be punished. It is true, he is a rogue, a rascal. *Perdone usted*!‡ It will go ill with him, it will go ill with him *Si està culpable*.§ Yes, yes; we will make the bakers plough straightforward. Long live the king, and the good Milanese, his most faithful subjects! It is bad, very bad. *Animo; estamos ya quasi afuera*."||

They had, in fact, traversed the thickest part of the crowd, and were now just on the point of issuing into the open street. Here Ferrer, as he began to give his lungs a little rest, met his tardy allies, those Spanish soldiers, who, towards the end, had not been quite useless, since, supported and directed by some citizen, they had assisted to disperse a few of the mob in quiet, and to keep open a passage for the final exit. On the arrival of the carriage, they made way and presented arms to the high chancellor, who returned the acknowledgment by a bow to the right and left; and to the officer who approached nearer to salute him, he said, accompanying the words with a wave of his right hand, "*Beso*

* It is to coax them.

† I say this for your good.

‡ Excuse me, sir.

§ If he be guilty.

|| Courage! we are almost out of danger.

á usted las manos ;"* which the officer took for what it really meant—You have given me fine assistance! In reply, he made another low bow, and shrugged his shoulders. It would have been appropriate enough to add, *Cedant arma togæ*, but Ferrer was not at that moment in a humour for quotations; and had he been, his words would have been wasted on the winds, for the officer did not understand Latin.

Pedro regained his ancient spirit in passing between these two files of puppets and these muskets so respectfully elevated. Having recovered from his consternation, he remembered who he was, and whom he was driving; and shouting "Ohey! ohey!" without the addition of other complimentary speeches to the mob, now sufficiently reduced in number to allow of his venturing on such treatment, he whipped on his horses, and took the road towards the castle.

"*Levanteses, levanteses; estamos afuera,*" † said Ferrer to the superintendent, who, re-assured by the cessation of the cries, by the rapid motion of the carriage, and by these words, uncovered and stretched himself, rose, and recovering himself a little, began to overwhelm his liberator with thanks. Ferrer, after having condoled with him on his perilous situation, and congratulated him on his safety, exclaimed, running the palm of his hand over his bald pate, "*Ah, que dirá de esto su Excelencia,*" ‡ who is already beside himself, for this cursed Casale, that won't surrender? "*Que dirá el Conde Duque,*" § who starts with fear if a leaf makes more noise than usual? "*Que dirá el Rey nuestro señor,*" || who will be sure to hear something

* Your servant, sir: literally, "I kiss your hand."

† Get up, get up; we are out of danger.

‡ What will his Excellency say of this?

§ What will the Count Duke say?

|| What will the King our master say?

of so great a tumult? And when will it be over? *Dios lo sabe.*”*

“Ah! as to myself, I will meddle no more in the business,” said the superintendent: “I wash my hands of it; I resign my office into your Excellency’s hands, and will go and live in a cave, or on a mountain, like a hermit, far, far away from this inhuman rabble.”

“*Usted* will do what is best *por el servicio de su Majestad*,”† gravely replied the chancellor.

“His Majesty does not desire my death,” answered the superintendent. “In a cave, in a cave, far from these people.” What followed afterwards upon this proposal is not recorded by our author, who, after accompanying the poor man to the castle, makes no further mention of his proceedings.

* God knows.

† You will do, sir, what is best for the service of his Majesty.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE crowd that was left behind began to disperse, and to branch off to the right and left along the different streets. One went home to attend to his business; another departed that he might breathe the fresh air in a little liberty, after so many hours of crowded confinement; while a third set off in search of acquaintances, with whom he might have a little chat about the doings of the day. The same dispersion was going on at the other end of the street, where the crowd was sufficiently thinned to allow the troop of Spaniards to advance, and approach the superintendent's house, without having to fight their

way. Around this, the dregs, so to say, of the insurgents were still congregated—a handful of rascals who, discontented with so quiet and imperfect a termination to such great preparations, grumbled, cursed, and consulted, to encourage themselves in seeking if something further might not be undertaken; and, by way of experiment, began beating and pounding at the unfortunate door, which had been again barred and propped up within. On the arrival of the troop, these, without previous consultation, but with a unanimous resolution, moved off, and departed by the opposite side, leaving the post free to the soldiers, who took possession of it, and encamped as a guard to the house and street. But the neighbouring streets and squares were still full of scattered groups: where two or three were standing, three, four, twenty others would stop; some would depart, others arrive: it was like those little straggling clouds that sometimes remain scattered and shifting over the azure sky after a storm, and make one say, on looking upwards, The weather is not settled yet. There was heard a confused and varying sound of voices: one was relating with much energy the particular incidents he had witnessed; another recounted what he himself had done; another congratulated his neighbours on this peaceable termination, applauded Ferrer, and prognosticated dire evils about to fall on the superintendent; others laughed at the idea, and asserted that no harm would be done him, because a wolf does not prey upon a wolf; while others more angrily murmured because things had not been managed properly—said that it was all a hoax, and that they were fools to have made such a hubbub, only to allow themselves, after all, to be cozened in this manner.

Meanwhile, the sun had set, and twilight spread its uniform sombreness over all objects. Many, wearied with the exertions of the day, and tired of gossiping in

the dark, returned to their respective homes. Our youth, after having assisted the progress of the carriage, so long as there was need of assistance, and having followed it even between the two files of soldiers, as in triumph, was satisfied when he saw it rolling along, uninterruptedly, out of danger; and accompanying the crowd a little way, he soon deserted it by the first outlet, that he might breathe a little fresh air in quiet. After taking a few steps at large, in the midst of much agitation from so many new scenes, so many passions, and so many recent and confused remembrances, he began to feel his need both of food and rest; and kept looking up from side to side, in hopes of seeing a sign of some inn, since it was too late to go to the convent. As he thus proceeded, gazing upwards, he suddenly lit upon a group of gossips; and stopping to listen, he heard them, as they talked, making conjectures, proposals, and designs for the morrow. After listening a moment or two, he could not resist putting in his word, thinking that he who had *done* so much might, without presumption, join a little in the conversation. Persuaded, from what he had seen during the day, that to accomplish anything, it was only necessary to suggest it to the populace, "My good sirs," cried he, by way of exordium: "may I, too, give my poor opinion? My poor opinion is this: that there are other iniquities besides this of bread. Now we've seen plain enough to-day that we can get justice by making ourselves felt. Then let us proceed until all these grievances are cured, that the world may move forward in a little more christian fashion. Isn't it true, gentlemen, that there's a set of tyrants who set at nought the Ten Commandments, and search out poor people, (who don't trouble their heads about them,) just to do them every mischief they can; and yet they're always in the right? Nay, when they've been acting the rascal more than usual, then hold their

heads higher than at other times? Yes, and even Milan has its share of them."

"Too many," said a voice.

"So I say," rejoined Renzo: "the accounts of them have already reached our ears. And, besides, the thing speaks for itself. Let us suppose, for instance, that one of those I am talking about should have one foot outside, and one in Milan: if he's a devil there, he won't be an angel here, I fancy. Yet just tell me, sirs, whether you've ever seen one of these men behind the grating! And the worst of it is (and this I can affirm with certainty,) there are proclamations in plenty published, to punish them; and those not proclamations without meaning, but well drawn out; you can't find anything better done: there are all sorts of villanies clearly mentioned, exactly as they happen, and to each one its proper punishment. It says: 'Whoever it may be, ignoble or plebeians,' and what not besides. Now, just go and ask doctors, scribes, and pharisees, to see justice done to you, as the proclamation warrants, and they will give you as much ear as the Pope does to vagabonds: it's enough to make any honest fellow turn desperate. It is plain enough, then, that the king, and those who command under him are desirous that knaves should be duly punished; but nothing is done because there is some league between them. We, therefore, ought to break it; we should go to-morrow morning to Ferrer, who is a worthy man, and a tractable signor; we saw to-day how glad he was to be amongst the poor people, and how he tried to hear what was said to him, and answered with such condescension. We should go to Ferrer, and tell him how things stand; and I, for my part, can tell him some fine doings; for I saw with my own eyes a proclamation with ever so many arms at the top, which had been made by three of the rulers, for there was the name of each of them printed plain below,

and one of these names was Ferrer, seen by me with my own eyes : now, this ediet exactly suited my ease ; and a doector, to whom I applied for justiec, aecording to the intention of these threc gentlemen, among whom was Ferrer himself, this signor doctor, who had himself shown me the proelamation, and a fine one it is, aha ! thought that I was talking to him like a madman ! I'm sure that when this worthy old fellow hears some of these fine doings, for he cannot know all, partieularly those in the country, he won't be willing to let the world go on this way, but will find some remedy for it. And besides, they who make the proelamations, ought to wish that they should be obeyed ; for it is an insult to count as nothing an ediet with their name fixed to it. And if the powerful ones won't lower their heads, and will still play the fool, we are ready to make them, as we've done to-day. I don't say that he should go about in his earriage, to carry off every powerful and overbearing raseal : eh, eh ! it would require Noah's ark for that. But he ought to eommand all those whose business it is, not only in Milan, but everywhere, to do things as the proelamations require ; and draw up an indietment against all those who have eommitted these iniquities ; and where it says, prison,—to prison ; where it says, galleys,—to the galleys ; and bid the *podestà* do his duty ; if he won't, send him about his business, and put a better man in his place ; and then besides, as I said, we should be ready to lend a hand. And he ought to order the lawyers to listen to the poor, and to talk reasonably. Don't I say right, my good sirs ?”

Renzo had talked so earnestly, that from the beginning a great part of the assemblage had stopp'd all other eonversation, and had turned to listen to him ; and, up to a eertain point, all had continued his auditors. A confused elamour of applause, of “ Bravo ; certainly, he is right ; it is too true ! ” followed his harangue.

Critics, however, were not wanting. "Oh, yes," said one, "listen to a mountaineer: they are all advocates;" and he went away. "Now," muttered another, "every ragamuffin must put in his word; and what with having too many irons in the fire, we shan't have bread sold cheap, which is what we've made this stir for." Renzo, however, heard nothing but compliments, one taking him by this hand, another by that. "I will see you to-morrow.—Where?—At the square of the Cathedral.—Very well.—Very well.—And something will be done.—And something will be done."

"Which of these good gentlemen will direct me to an inn, where I can get something to eat, and a lodging for the night, that will suit a poor youth's pocket?" said Renzo.

"I am at your service, my brave fellow," said one who had listened attentively to his harangue, and had not yet said a word. "I know an inn that will just suit you; and I will introduce you to the landlord, who is my friend, and a very worthy man."

"Near at hand?" asked Renzo.

"Only a little way off," replied he.

The assembly dispersed; and Renzo, after several warm shakes of the hand from strangers, went off with his new acquaintance, thanking him heartily for his kindness.

"Not a word, not a word," said he: "one hand washes the other, and both the face. Is it not one's duty to serve one's neighbour?" And as he walked, he kept making of Renzo, in the course of conversation, first one and then another inquiry. "Not out of curiosity about your doings; but you seem tired: where do you come from?"

"I come," replied Renzo, "as far as from Lecco."

"From Lecco! Are you a native of Lecco?"

"Of Lecco . . . that is, of the territory."

"Poor fellow! from what I have gathered in your conversation, you seem to have been badly treated."

"Eh! my dear fellow, I was obliged to speak rather carefully, that I might not publish my affairs to the world; but . . . it's enough; some day it will be known, and then But I see a sign of an inn here; and, to say the truth, I am not inclined to go any further."

"No, no; come where I told you: it's a very little way further," said the guide: "here you won't be comfortable."

"Very well," replied the youth: "I'm not a gentleman, accustomed to down, though: something good to supply the garrison, and a straw mattress, are enough for me: and what I most want is to find both directly. Here we are, fortunately." And he entered a shabby-looking doorway, over which hung the sign of The Full Moon.

"Well; I will lead you here, since you wish it," said the incognito; and he followed him in.

"Don't trouble yourself any further," replied Renzo. "However," added he, "you will do me the favour of taking a glass with me."

"I accept your kind offer," replied he; and he advanced, as being better acquainted with the place, before Renzo, through a little court, approached a glass door, lifted up the latch, and, opening it, entered with his companion into the kitchen.

Two lights illuminated the apartment, suspended from two hooks fixed in the beam of the ceiling. Many persons, all of whom were engaged, were lounging on benches which stretched along both sides of a narrow, dirty table, occupying almost the whole of one side of the room: here and there a cloth was spread, and a few dishes set out; at intervals, cards were played, and dice cast, and gathered up; and everywhere were bottles and glasses. On the wet table were to be seen *berlinghe*,

reali, and *parpagliole*,* which, could they have spoken, would probably have said : This morning we were in a baker's till, or in the pockets of some of the spectators of the tumult ; for every one, intent on watching how public matters went, forgot to look after their own private interests. The clamour was great. A boy was going backwards and forwards in haste and bustle, waiting upon this table and sundry chess-boards : the host was sitting upon a small bench under the chimney-piece, occupied, apparently, in making and un-making certain figures in the ashes with the tongs ; but, in reality, intent on all that was going on around him. He rose at the sound of the latch, and advanced towards the new comers. When he saw the guide,—Cursed fellow ! thought he :—you are always coming to plague me, when I least want you !—Then, hastily glancing at Renzo, he again said to himself :—I don't know you ; but, coming with such a hunter, you must be either a dog or a hare : when you have said two words, I shall know which.—However, nothing of this mute soliloquy appeared in the landlord's countenance, which was as immoveable as a picture : a round and shining face, with a thick reddish beard, and two bright and staring eyes.

“ What are your commands, gentlemen ? ” said he.

“ First of all, a good flask of wine,” said Renzo, “ and then something to eat.” So saying, he sat down on a bench towards the end of the table, and uttered a sonorous “ Ah ! ” which seemed to say : it does one good to sit down after having been so long standing and working so hard. But immediately the recollection of the bench and the table at which he had last sat with Lucia and Agnese, rushed to his mind, and forced from him a sigh. He shook his head to drive away the thought, and then saw the host coming with the wine. His

* Different kinds of Spanish and Milanese coins.

companion had sat down opposite to Renzo, who poured him out a glass, and pushed it towards him, saying: "To moisten your lips." And filling the other glass, he emptied it at one draught.

"What can you give me to eat?" then demanded he of the landlord.

"A good bit of stewed meat?" asked he.

"Yes, sir; a bit of stewed meat."

"You shall be served directly," said the host to Renzo; and turning to the boy: "Attend to this stranger."

And he retreated to the fire-place. "But..." resumed he, turning again towards Renzo: "we have no bread to-day."

"As to bread," said Renzo, in a loud voice and laughing, "Providence has provided that." And drawing from his pocket the third and last loaf which he had picked up under the Cross of San Dionigi, he raised it in the air, exclaiming: "Behold the bread of Providence!" Many turned on hearing this exclamation; and, seeing such a trophy in the air, somebody called out: "Hurrah for bread at a low price!"

"At a low price?" said Renzo: "*Gratis et amore.*"

"Better still, better still."

"But," added he, immediately, "I should not like these gentlemen to think ill of me. I have not, as they say, stolen it: I found it on the ground; and if I could find its owner, I am ready to pay him for it."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried his companions, laughing more loudly, without its entering into one of their minds that these words seriously expressed a real fact and intention.

"They think I'm joking; but it's just so," said Renzo, to his guide; and, turning the loaf over in his hand, he added: "See how they've crushed it; it looks like a cake: but there were plenty close by it! if any of them

had had very tender bones they'd have come badly off." Then, biting off and devouring three or four mouthfuls, he swallowed another glass of wine, and added, "This bread won't go down alone. I never had so dry a throat. A great shouting there was!"

"Prepare a good bed for this honest fellow," said the guide; "for he intends to sleep here."

"Do you wish a bed?" asked the landlord of Renzo, advancing towards the table.

"Certainly," replied he: "a bed, to be sure; only let the sheets be clean; for, though I'm but a poor lad, I'm accustomed to cleanliness."

"Oh! as to that," said the host: and going to a counter that stood in a corner of the kitchen, he returned with an inkstand and a little bit of writing-paper in one hand, and a pen in the other.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Renzo, gulping down a mouthful of the stew that the boy had set before him, and then smiling in astonishment: "Is this the white sheet, eh?"

Without making any reply, the landlord laid the paper on the table, and put the inkstand by the paper: then stooping forward, he rested his left arm on the table and his right elbow, and holding the pen in the air, with his face raised towards Renzo, said to him: "Will you be good enough to tell me your name, surname, and country?"

"What?" said Renzo: "What has all this to do with my bed?"

"I do my duty," said the host, looking towards the guide; "we are obliged to give an account and relation of every one that comes to sleep in our house: *name and surname, and of what nation he is, on what business he comes, if he has any arms with him how long he intends to stay in this city* They are the very words of the proclamation."

Before replying, Renzo swallowed another glass; it was the third, and from this time forward, I fear we shall not be able to count them. He then said, "Ah! ah! you have the proclamation! And I pride myself upon being a doctor of law; so I know well enough what importance is attached to edicts."

"I speak in earnest," said the landlord, keeping his eye on Renzo's mute companion; and going again to the counter, he drew out a large sheet, an exact copy of the proclamation, and came to display it before Renzo's eyes.

"Ah! see!" exclaimed the youth, raising the re-filled glass in one hand, and quickly emptying it, while he stretched out the other, and pointed with his finger towards the unfolded proclamation: "Look at that fine sheet, like a missal. I'm delighted to see it. I know those arms; and I know what that heretical face means, with the noose round its neck." (At the head of the edicts the arms of the governor were usually placed; and in those of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova appeared a Moorish king, chained by the throat.)

"That face means: Command who can, and obey who will. When that face shall have sent to the galleys Signor don — never mind, I know who; as another parchment says, like this; when it has provided that an honest youth may marry an honest girl who is willing to be married to him, then I will tell my name to this face, and will give it a kiss into the bargain. I may have very good reasons for not telling my name. Oh, truly! And if a rascal, who had under his command a handful more of rascals; for if he were alone —" Here he finished his sentence with a gesture: "If a rascal wanted to know where I am, to do me an ill turn, I ask if that face would move itself to help me. I'm to tell my business! This is something new. Supposing I had come to Milan to confess, I should wish to confess

to a Capuchin Father, I beg to say, and not to a landlord."

The host was silent, and looked towards the guide, who gave no token of noticing what passed. Renzo, we grieve to say, swallowed another glass, and continued: "I will give you a reason, my dear landlord, which will satisfy you. If those proclamations which speak in favour of good Christians are worth nothing, those which speak against them are worth still less. So carry away all these bothering things, and bring us instead another flask; for this is broken." So saying, he tapped it lightly with his knuckles, and added: "Listen, how it sounds like a cracked bottle."

Renzo's language had again attracted the attention of the party; and when he ceased, there arose a general murmur of approbation.

"What must I do?" said the host, looking at the incognito, who was, however, no stranger to him.

"Away, away with them," cried many of the guests: "this countryman has some sense; they are grievances, tricks, impositions; new laws to-day, new laws!"

In the midst of these cries, the incognito, glancing towards the landlord a look of reproof for this too public magisterial summons, said, "Let him have his own way a little; don't give any offence."

"I have done my duty," said the host, in a loud voice; and added, to himself:—Now I have *my shoulders against the wall*.—He then removed the pen, ink, and paper, and took the empty flagon to give it to the boy.

"Bring the same sort of wine," said Renzo; "for I find it a worthy fellow, and will send it to sleep with the other, without asking its name or surname, and what is its business, and if it intends to stay any time in the city."

"Some more of the same sort," said the landlord, to

the boy, giving him the flask ; and he returned to his seat under the chimney-piece.—More simple than a hare !—thought he, figuring away in the cinders :—and into what hands hast thou fallen ! Thou great ass ! If thou wilt drown, drown ; but the landlord of the Full Moon isn't obliged to go shares in thy folly !—

Renzo returned thanks to his guide, and to all the rest who had taken his part. “ Brave friends,” said he, “ now I see clearly that honest fellows give each other a hand, and support each other.” Then waving his hand in the air, over the table, and again assuming the air of a speaker, “ Isn't it an admirable thing,” exclaimed he, “ that all our rulers will have pen, ink, and paper, intruding everywhere ? Always a pen in the hand ! They must have a mighty passion for wielding the pen ! ”

“ Eh ! you worthy countryman ! would you like to know the reason ? ” said a winner in one of the games, laughing.

“ Let us hear,” replied Renzo.

“ The reason is,” said he, “ that as these Signori eat geese, they find they have got so many quills that they are obliged to make something of them.”

All began to laugh, excepting the poor man who had just been a loser.

“ Oh,” said Renzo, “ this man is a poet. You have some poets here, then : they are springing up everywhere. I have a little turn that way myself ; and sometimes I make some fine verses but that's when things go smoothly.”

To understand this nonsense of poor Renzo's, the reader must know that, amongst the lower orders in Milan, and still more in the country, the term poet did not signify, as among all educated people, a sacred genius, an inhabitant of Pindus, a votary of the Muses ; it rather meant a humorous and even giddy-headed person, who in conversation and behaviour had more

repartee and novelty than sense. So daring are these mischief-makers among the vulgar, in destroying the meaning of words, and making them express things the most foreign and contrary to their legitimate signification! For what, I should like to know, has a poet to do with a giddy brain?

“But I’ll tell you the true reason,” added Renzo; “It is because they hold the pen in their own hand: and so the words that they utter fly away and disappear; the words that a poor lad speaks, are carefully noted, and very soon they fly through the air with this pen, and are down upon paper to be made use of at a proper time and place. They’ve also another trick, that when they would bother a poor fellow who doesn’t know letters, but who has a little I know what” and to illustrate his meaning he began tapping, and almost battering his forehead with his forefinger, “no sooner do they perceive that he begins to understand the puzzle, than, forsooth, they must throw in a little Latin, to make him lose the thread, to prevent his defending himself, and to perplex his brain. Well, well! it is our business to do away with these practices! To-day everything has been done reasonably, in our own tongue, and without pen, ink, and paper: and to-morrow, if people will but govern themselves, we will do still better; without touching a hair of their heads, though; everything must be done in a fair way.”

In the meantime some of the company had returned to their gaming, others to eating, and many to shouting; some went away, and others arrived in their place; the landlord busied himself in attending upon all; but these things have nothing to do with our story.

The unknown guide was impatient to take his departure; yet, though he had not, to all appearance, any business at the house, he would not go away till he had chatted a little with Renzo, individually. He, therefore,

turned to him, and renewed the conversation about bread; and after a few of those expressions which had been, for some time, in everybody's mouth, he began to give his own opinion. "Eh! if I were ruling," said he, "I would find a way of making things right."

"How would you do?" asked Renzo, fixing on him two eyes more sparkling than usual, and twisting his mouth awry, as it were to be more attentive.

"How would I do?" said he; "I would have bread for all: for poor as well as rich."

"Ah! so far well," said Renzo.

"See how I would do. First, I would fix a moderate price, that everybody could reach. Then I would distribute bread according to the number of mouths: for there are some inconsiderate gluttons who would have all to themselves, and strive who can get the most, buying at a high price, and thus there isn't bread enough for the poor people. Therefore, distribute bread. And how should that be done? See: give a note to every family, in proportion to the number of mouths, to go and get bread at the bakehouses. To me, for example, they should give a note of this kind:—Ambrogio Fusella, by trade a sword-cutler, with a wife and four children, all of an age to eat bread (note that well): let them have so much bread; and pay so many pence. But to do things justly, it must always be in proportion to the number of mouths. You, we will suppose, ought to have a note for your name?"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino," said the youth; who, delighted with the plan, never recollected that it was entirely founded on paper, pen, and ink, and that to put it in execution the first thing must be to get everybody's name.

"Very well," said the stranger: "but have you a wife and children?"

"I ought, indeed . . . children, no . . . too soon . . . but a wife . . . if the world went as it ought . . ."

"Ah, you are single! Well, have patience; but a smaller portion . . ."

"You are right; but if soon, as I hope . . . and by the help of God . . . Enough; and when I've a wife too?"

"Then change the note, and increase the quantity. As I said; always in proportion to the number of mouths," said the unknown, rising from his seat.

"That is all very good," cried Renzo; and he continued, vociferously, as he struck his hand upon the table: "And why don't they make a law of this kind?"

"How can I tell? But I must bid you good night, and be off; for I fancy my wife and children have been looking out for me this good while."

"Just another little drop—another little drop," cried Renzo, hastily filling his glass; and, rising quickly, he seized the skirt of his doublet, and tried to force him to sit down again. "Another little drop; don't do me this insult."

But his friend disengaged himself with a sudden jerk, and leaving Renzo to indulge in importunity and reproaches as he pleased, again said: "Good night," and went away. Renzo shouted after him when he had even reached the street, and then sank back upon his seat. He eyed the glass that he had just filled; and seeing the boy passing the table, he detained him with a beckon of his hand, as if he had some business to communicate to him; he then pointed to the glass, and, with a slow and grave enunciation, and pronouncing the words in a peculiar manner, said: "See, I had prepared it for that worthy gentleman: do you see? full to the brim, fit for a friend; but he wouldn't have it; people have very odd ideas, sometimes. I couldn't do otherwise; I let him see my kind intentions. Now, then,

since the thing is done, I mus'n't let it go to waste." So saying, he took it, and emptied it at a draught.

"I understand," said the boy, going away.

"Ah! you understand, do you?" replied Renzo : "then it is true. When reasons are sensible ! . . ."

Nothing less than our love of truthfulness would induce us to prosecute a faithful account which does so little credit to so important a person, we may almost say, to the principal hero, of our story. From this same motive of impartiality, however, we must also state, that this was the first time that such a thing happened to Renzo : and it is just because he was not accustomed to such excesses that his first attempt succeeded so fatally. The few glasses that he had swallowed, one after another, at first, contrary to his usual habits, partly to cool his parched throat, partly from a sort of excitement of mind which gave him no liberty to do anything in moderation, quickly went to his head : a more practised drinker would probably never have felt them. Our anonymous author here makes an observation which we repeat for the benefit of those of our readers who know how to value it. Temperate and honest habits, says he, bring with them this advantage : that the more they are established and rooted in a man, so much the more easily, when he acts contrary to them, does he immediately feel the injury or inconvenience, or, to say the least, the disagreeability of such an action : so that he has something to remember for a time ; and thus even a slight fault serves him for a lesson.

However this may be, certain it is that when these first fumes had mounted to Renzo's brain, wine and words continued to flow, one down, the other up, without measure or reason : and at the point where we have left him, he had got quite beyond his powers of self-government. He felt a great desire to talk : auditors, or at least men present whom he could

imagine such, were not wanting; and for some time also words had readily occurred to him, and he had been able to arrange them in some sort of order. But by degrees his power of connecting sentences began wofully to fail. The thought that had presented itself vividly and definitively to his mind, suddenly clouded over and vanished; while the word he wanted and waited for, was, when it occurred to him, inapplicable and unseasonable. In this perplexity, by one of those false instincts that so often ruin men, he would again have recourse to the flagon; but any one with a grain of sense will be able to imagine of what use the flagon was to him then.

We will only relate some of the many words he uttered in this disastrous evening: the others which we omit would be too unsuitable; for they not only had no meaning, but made no show of having any—a necessary requisite in a printed book.

“Ah, host, host,” resumed he, following him with his eye round the table, or under the chimney-piece; sometimes gazing at him where he was not, and talking all the time in the midst of the uproar of the party: “What a landlord you are! I cannot swallow this . . . this trick about the name, surname, and business. To a youth like me! . . . You have not behaved well. What satisfaction now, what advantage, what pleasure . . . to put upon paper a poor youth? Don’t I speak sense, gentlemen? Landlords ought to stand by good youths . . . Listen, listen, landlord; I will compare you . . . because . . . Do you laugh, eh! I am a little too far gone, I know . . . but the reasons I would give are right enough. Just tell me, now, who is it that keeps up your trade? Poor fellows, isn’t it? See if any of these gentlemen of the proclamations ever come here to wet their lips.”

“They are all people that drink water,” said one of Renzo’s neighbours.

"They want to have their heads clear," added another, "to be able to tell lies cleverly."

"Ah!" cried Renzo. "That was the poet who spoke then. Then you also understand my reason. Answer me, then, landlord; and Ferrer, who is the best of all, has he ever come here to drink a toast, or to spend a quarter of a farthing? And that dog of a villain, Don I'll hold my tongue, because I'm a careful fellow. Ferrer and Father Cr-r-r I know, they are two worthy men; but there are so few worthy men in the world. The old are worse than the young; and the young worse again than the old. However, I am glad there has been no murdering; fye; eruelties that should be left for the hangman's hands. Bread; oh yes! I got some great pushes, but . . . I gave some away too. Room! plenty! long live! . . . However, even Ferrer . . . some few words in Latin . . . *siés baraòs trapolorum* . . . Cursed trick! Long live! . . . justiee! bread! Ah, these are fair words! There we wanted these eomrades when that cursed ton, ton, ton, broke forth, and then again ton, ton, ton. We did not flee then, do you see, to keep that signor eurate there . . . I know what I'm thinking about!"

At these words he bent down his head, and remained some time as if absorbed in some idea; he then heaved a deep sigh, and raised a face with two piteous-looking eyes, and such an expression of disagreeable and stupid grief, that woe to him if the object of it could have seen him at that moment. But the wicked men around him, who had already begun to divert themselves with the impassioned and confused eloquence of Renzo, now hastened to ridicule his countenance tinctured with remorse; the nearest to him said to the others: "Look at him;" and all turned towards the poor fellow, so that he became the laughing-stock of the unruly company. Not that all of them were in their

perfect senses, or in their ordinary senses, whatever they might be ; but, to say the truth, none of them had gone so far as poor Renzo : and still more, he was a country-man. They began, first one and then another, to provoke him with foolish and unmannerly questions, and jesting ceremonies. One moment he would seem to be offended, the next, would take the treatment in joke ; now, without taking notice of all these voices, he would talk of something quite different, now replying, now interrogating, but always by starts and blunders. Fortunately, in all this extravagance, he had preserved a kind of instinctive carefulness not to mention the names of persons, so that even that which was most likely to be firmly fixed in his memory was not once uttered ; for deeply it would have grieved us if that name for which even we entertain a degree of respect and affection, had been bandied about, and become the sport of these abandoned wretches.





CHAPTER XV.

THE landlord, seeing the game was lasting too long, and being carried too far, had approached Renzo, and, with the greatest politeness, requesting the others to leave him alone, began shaking him by the arm, and tried to make him understand, and persuade him that he had better go to bed. But Renzo could not forget the old subject of the name, and surname, the proclamations, and worthy youths. However, the words "bed" and "sleep," repeated in his ear, wrought some kind of impression on his mind; they made him feel a little more distinctly his need of what they signified, and produced a momentary lucid interval. The little sense that returned to his mind, made him, in some degree, sensible that most of his companions had gone: as the last glimmering torch in an illumination shows all the

others extinguished. He made a resolution; placed his open hands upon the table; tried once or twice to raise himself; sighed, staggered, and, at a third attempt, supported by his host, he stood upon his feet. The landlord, steadying him as he walked along, guided him from between the bench and the table, and taking a lamp in one hand, partly conducted, and partly dragged him with the other, towards the door of the stairs. Here, Renzo, on hearing the noise of the salutations which were shouted after him by the company, hastily turned round, and if his supporter had not been very alert, and held him by the arm, the evolution would have ended in a heavy fall: however, he managed to turn back, and, with his unconfined arm, began figuring and describing in the air sundry salutes like a running knot.

“Let us go to bed; to bed,” said the landlord, pushing him forward through the door; and with still more difficulty drawing him to the top of the narrow wooden staircase, and then into the room he had prepared for him. Renzo rejoiced on seeing his bed ready; he looked graciously upon his host, with eyes which one moment glistened more than ever, and the next faded away, like two fire-flies: he endeavoured to steady himself on his legs, and stretched out his hand towards his host’s cheek to take it between his first and middle fingers, in token of friendship and gratitude, but he could not succeed. “Brave landlord,” he at last managed to stammer out; “now I see that you are a worthy fellow: this is a kind deed, to give a poor youth a bed; but that trick about the name and surname, that wasn’t like a gentleman. By good luck, I saw through it”

The landlord, who little thought he could have uttered anything so connected, and who knew, by long experience, how men in such a condition may be induced more easily than usual, suddenly to change their minds, was

determined to take advantage of this lucid interval, to make another attempt.

"My dear fellow," said he, with a most coaxing tone and look, "I didn't do it to vex you, nor to pry into your affairs. What would you have? There are the laws, and we must obey them; otherwise we are the first to suffer the punishment. It is better to satisfy them, and After all, what is it all about? A great thing, certainly, to say two words! Not, however, for them, but to do me a favour. Here, between ourselves, face to face, let us do our business: tell me your name and and then go to bed with a quiet mind."

"Ah, rascal!" exclaimed Renzo: "Cheat! you are again returning to the charge, with that infamous name, surname, and business!"

"Hold your tongue, simpleton, and go to bed," said the landlord.

But Renzo pursued more vehemently: "I understand: you are one of the league. Wait, wait, and I'll settle it." And directing his voice towards the head of the stairs, he began to shout more vociferously than ever, "Friends! the landlord is of the"

"I only said it in joke," cried he, in Renzo's face, repulsing him, and pushing him towards the bed—"In joke: didn't you understand that I only said it in joke?"

"Ah! in joke: now you speak sensibly. When you say in joke They are just things to make a joke of." And he sank upon the bed.

"Here; undress yourself, and be quick;" said the host, adding assistance to his advice; and there was need of it. When Renzo had succeeded in getting off his waistcoat, the landlord took it, and put his hands in the pockets to see if there were any money in them. His search was successful; and thinking that his guest would have something else to do than to pay him on the morrow, and that this money would probably fall

into hands whence a landlord would not easily be able to recover any share, he resolved to risk another attempt.

"You are a good youth, and an honest man, arn't you?" said he.

"Good youth, and honest man," replied Renzo, vainly endeavouring to undo the buttons of the clothes which he had not yet been able to take off.

"Very well," rejoined the host: "just settle, then, this little account; for to-morrow I must go out on some business"

"That's only fair," said Renzo: "I'm a fool, but I'm honest But the money? Am I to go look for money now!"

"It's here," said the innkeeper; and calling up all his practice, patience, and skill, he succeeded in settling the account, and securing the reckoning.

"Lend me a hand to finish undressing, landlord," said Renzo; "I'm beginning to feel very sleepy."

The landlord performed the required office: he then spread the quilt over him, and, almost before he had time to say, disdainfully, "Good night!" Renzo was snoring fast asleep. Yet, with that sort of attraction which sometimes induces us to contemplate an object of dislike as well as of affection, and which, perhaps, is nothing else than a desire of knowing what operates so forcibly on our mind, he paused, for a moment, to contemplate so annoying a guest, holding the lamp towards his face, and throwing the light upon it with a strong reflection, by screening it with his hand, almost in the attitude in which Psyche is depicted, when stealthily regarding the features of her unknown consort.—Mad blockhead!—said he, in his mind, to the poor sleeper, —you've certainly taken the way to look for it. To-morrow you'll be able to tell me how you've liked it. Clowns, who will stroll over the world, *without knowing*

whereabouts the sun rises, just to bring themselves and their neighbours into trouble!—

So saying, or rather thinking, he withdrew the light, and left the room, locking the door behind him. On the landing-place at the top of the stairs, he called the landlady, and bade her leave the children under the care of a young servant girl, and go down into the kitchen, to preside and keep guard in his stead. “I must go out, thanks to a stranger who has arrived here, to my misfortune,” said he; and he briefly related the annoying circumstance. He then added: “Have your eyes everywhere; and, above all, be prudent this unfortunate day. There’s a group of licentious fellows down below, who, between drink and their own inclination, are ready enough to talk, and will say anything. It will be enough, if a rash”

“Oh, I’m not a child; and I know well enough what’s to be done. I think you can’t say that, up to this time . . .”

“Well, well; and be sure they pay; and pretend not to hear anything they say about the superintendent of provisions, and the governor, and Ferrer, and the *decurioni*, and the cavaliers, and Spain, and France, and such fooleries; for if you contradict them, you’ll come off badly directly; and if you agree with them, you may fare badly afterwards: and *you* know well enough, that sometimes those who say the worst things . . . But enough; when you hear certain sayings, turn away your head, and ery, ‘I’m coming,’ as if somebody was calling you from the other side; I’ll come back as quick as I can.”

So saying, he went down with her into the kitchen, and gave a glance round, to see if there was anything new of consequence; took down his hat and cloak from a peg, reached a short, thick stick out of the corner, summed up, in one glance at his wife, the instructions he had given her, and went out. But during these preparations, he had again resumed the thread of the

apostrophe begun at Renzo's bedside; and continued it, even while proceeding on his walk.

—Obstinate fellow of a mountaineer!—For, however Renzo was determined to conceal his condition, this qualification had betrayed itself in his words, pronunciation, appearance, and actions.—Such a day as this, by good policy and judgment, I thought to have come off clear; and you must just come in at the end of it, to spoil the egg in the hatching. Were there no other inns in Milan, that you must just light upon mine? Would that you had even lit upon it alone! I would then have shut my eyes to it to-night, and to-morrow morning would have given you a hint. But, my good sir, no; you must come in company; and, to do better still, in company with a sheriff.—

At every step, the innkeeper met either with solitary passengers, or persons in groups of three or four, whispering together. At this stage of his mute soliloquy, he saw a patrol of soldiers approaching, and, going a little aside, peeped at them from under the corner of his eye as they passed, and continued to himself:—There go the fool-chastisers. And you, great ass, because you saw a few people rambling about and making a noise, it must even come into your brain that the world is turning upside down. And on this fine foundation you have ruined yourself, and are trying to ruin me too; this isn't fair. I did my best to save you; and you, you fool, in return, have very nearly made a disturbance in my inn. Now you must get yourself out of the scrape, and I will look to my own business. As if I wanted to know your name out of curiosity! What does it matter to me, whether it be Thaddeus or Bartholomew? A mighty desire I have to take the pen in hand; but you are not the only people who would have things all their own way. I know, as well as you, that there are proclamations which go for nothing: a fine

novelty, that a mountainer should come to tell me that ! But you don't know that proclamations against landlords are good for something. And you pretend to travel over the land, and speak ; and don't know that, if one would have one's own way, and carry the proclamations in one's pocket, the first thing requisite is not to speak against them in public. And for a poor innkeeper who was of your opinion, and didn't ask the name of any one who happens to favour him with his company, do you know, you fool, what good things are in store for him ?— *Under pain of three hundred crowns to any one of the aforesaid landlords, tavern-keepers, and others, as above ; there are three hundred crowns hatched ; and now to spend them well ; to be applied, two-thirds to the royal chamber, and the other third to the accuser or informer : what a fine bait ! And in case of inability, five years in the galleys, and greater punishment, pecuniary or corporal, at the will of his Excellency.* Much obliged for all his favours.—

At these words the landlord reached the door of the court of the high-sheriff.

Here, as at all the other secretaries' offices, much business was going forward. Everywhere they were engaged in giving such orders as seemed most likely to pre-occupy the following day, to take away every pretext for discontent, to overcome the boldness of those who were anxious for fresh tumults, and to confirm power in the hands of those accustomed to exercise it. The soldiery round the house of the superintendent were increased, and the ends of the street were blockaded with timber, and barricaded with carts. They commanded all the bakers to make bread without intermission, and despatched couriers to the surrounding country, with orders to send corn into the city ; while noblemen were stationed at every bakchouse, who repaired thither early in the morning to superintend the distribution, and to restrain the factious, by fair

words, and the authority of their presence. But to give, as the saying is, one blow to the hoop and another to the cask, and to render their cajolings more efficient by a little awe, they thought also of taking measures to seize some one of the seditious: and this was principally the business of the high-sheriff, whose temper towards the insurrection and the insurgents the reader may imagine, when he is informed of the vegetable fomentation which it was found necessary to apply to one of the organs of his metaphysical profundity. His blood-hounds had been in the field from the beginning of the riot: and this self-styled Ambrogio Fusella was, as the landlord said, a disguised under-sheriff, sent about for the express purpose of catching in the act some one whom he could again recognise, whose motions he could watch, and whom he could keep in mind, so as to seize, either in the quiet of the evening or next morning. He had not heard four words of Renzo's harangue, before he had fixed upon him as a capital object—exactly his man. Finding, afterwards, that he was just fresh from the country, he had attempted the master-stroke of conducting him at once to the prison, as the safest inn in the city; but here he failed, as we have related. He could, however, bring back certain information of his name, surname, and country; besides a hundred other fine conjectural pieces of information; so that when the innkeeper arrived here to tell what he knew of Renzo, they were already better acquainted with him than he. He entered the usual apartment, and deposed that a stranger had arrived at his house to lodge, who could not be persuaded to declare his name.

“You've done your duty in giving us this information,” said a criminal notary, laying down his pen: “But we know it already.”

—A strange mystery!—thought the host:—they must be wonderfully clever!—

“And we know, too,” continued the notary, “this revered name.”

—The name, too! how have they managed it?—thought the landlord again.

“But you,” resumed the other, with a serious face, “you don’t tell all, candidly.”

“What more have I to say?”

“Ha! ha! we know very well that this fellow brought to your inn a quantity of stolen bread—plundered, acquired by robbery and sedition.”

“A man comes, with one loaf in his pocket; do you think I know where he went to get it? for, to speak as on my deathbed, I can positively affirm that I saw but one loaf.”

“There! always excusing and defending yourself: one would think, to hear you, everybody was honest. How can you prove that his bread was fairly obtained?”

“Why am I to prove it? I don’t meddle with it; I am an innkeeper.”

“You cannot, however, deny that this customer of yours had the temerity to utter injurious words against the proclamations, and to make improper and shameful jokes on the arms of his Excellency.”

“Pardon me, sir: how can he be called my customer, when this is the first time I’ve ever seen him? It was the devil (under your favour) that sent him to my house: and if I had known him, you, sir, know well enough I should have had no occasion to ask his name.”

“Well: in your inn, in your presence, inflammatory speeches have been uttered, unadvised words, seditious propositions; murmurs, grumbles, outcries.”

“How can you expect, my good sir, that I should attend to the extravagances which so many noisy fellows, talking all at the same time, may chance to utter? I must attend to my interest, for I’m only badly off. And besides, your worship knows well enough that

those who are lavish of their tongues are generally ready with their fists too, particularly when there are so many together, and”

“Aye, aye; leave them alone to talk and fight: to-morrow you’ll see if their tricks have gone out of their heads. What do you think?”

“I think nothing about it.”

“That the mob will have got the upper hand in Milan?”

“Oh, just so!”

“We shall see, we shall see.”

“I understand very well: the king will be always king; and he that is fined will be fined: but the poor father of a family naturally wishes to escape. Your honours have the power, and it belongs to you.”

“Have you many people still in your house?”

“A world of them.”

“And this customer of yours, what is he doing? Does he still continue to be clamorous, to excite the people, and arouse sedition?”

“That stranger, your worship means: he’s gone to bed.”

“Then, you’ve many people Well, take care not to let them go away.”

—Am I to be a constable?—thought the landlord, without replying either negatively or affirmatively.

“Go home again, and be careful,” resumed the notary.

“I’ve always been careful. Your honour can say whether I have ever made any opposition to justice.”

“Well, well; and don’t think that justice has lost its power.”

“I! For Heaven’s sake! I think nothing: I only attend to my business.”

“The old song: you’ve never anything else to say.”

“What else would your worship have me say? truth is but one.”

“ Well: we will remember what you have deposed; if the ease comes on, you will have to give more particular information to justice about whatever they may choose to ask you.”

“ What can I depose further? I know nothing. I have scarcely head enough to attend to my own business.”

“ Take care you don’t let him go.”

“ I hope that his worship the high-sheriff will be informed that I came immediately to discharge my duty. Your honour’s humble servant.”

By break of day, Renzo had been snoring for about seven hours, and was still, poor fellow, fast asleep, when two rough shakes at either arm, and a voice at the foot of the bed, calling “ Lorenzo Tramaglino!” recalled him to his senses. He shook himself, stretched his arms, and with difficulty opening his eyes, saw a man standing before him at the foot of the bed, dressed in black, and two others armed, one on the right and the other on the left of his pillow. Between surprise, not being fully awake, and the stupidity occasioned by the wine of the night before, he lay, for a moment, as if bewildered; and then, thinking he was dreaming, and not being very well pleased with his dream, he shook himself so as to awake thoroughly.

“ Ah! have you heard, for once, Lorenzo Tramaglino?” said the man with the black cloak, the very notary of the night before. “ Up; up, then; get up, and come with us.”

“ Lorenzo Tramaglino!” said Renzo: “ What does this mean? What do you want with me? Who’s told you my name?”

“ Less talk, and up with you directly,” said one of the bailiffs who stood at his side, taking him again by the arm.

“ Ah, eh! what oppression is this?” cried Renzo, withdrawing his arm. “ Landlord! ho, landlord!”

“ Shall we carry him off in his shirt ? ” said the bailiff again, looking towards the notary.

“ Did you hear that ? ” said he to Renzo : “ they ’ll do so, if you don ’t get up as quick as thought, and come with us. ”

“ And what for ? ” asked Renzo.

“ The *what for* you will hear from the high-sheriff. ”

“ I ? I ’m an honest man ; I ’ve done nothing ; and I ’m astonished ! ”

“ So much the better for you—so much the better for you ; for then you may be discharged with two words, and may go about your own business. ”

“ Let me go now, ” said Renzo : “ I ’ve nothing to do with justice. ”

“ Come, let us finish the business, ” said one of the bailiffs.

“ Shall we carry him off ? ” said the other.

“ Lorenzo Tramaglino ! ” said the notary.

“ How do you know my name, sir ? ”

“ Do your duty, ” said the notary to the bailiffs, who immediately laid hands on Renzo to pull him out of bed.

“ Hey ! don ’t you touch a hair of an honest fellow, or ! I know how to dress myself. ”

“ Then dress yourself, and get up directly, ” said the notary.

“ I ’m getting up, ” replied Renzo ; and he began, in fact, to gather up his clothes, which were scattered here and there on the bed, like the relics of a shipwreck on the shore. And beginning to dress himself, he continued : “ But I ’m not inclined to go to the high-sheriff, not I. I ’ve nothing to do with him. Since you unjustly put this affront upon me, I should like to be conducted to Ferrer. I know him ; I know that he ’s a gentleman, and he ’s under some obligation to me. ”

“ Yes, yes, my good fellow, you shall be conducted to Ferrer, ” replied the notary. In other circumstances he would have laughed heartily at such a proposal ; but

this was not a time for merriment. In coming thither, he had noticed in the streets a movement which could not easily be defined as the remainder of the old insurrection not entirely suppressed, or the beginning of a new one : the streets were full of people, some walking in parties, some standing in groups. And now, without seeming to do so, or at least trying not to show it, he was anxiously listening, and fancied that the murmur continued to increase. This made him desirous to get off; but he also wished to take Renzo away willingly and quietly; since, if he had declared war against him, he could not have been sure, on reaching the street, of not finding three to one against him. He, therefore, winked at the bailiffs to have patience, and not to irritate the youth, while he also endeavoured to soothe him with fair words. Renzo busied himself, while dressing as quickly as possible, in recalling the confused remembrances of the day before, and at last conjectured, with tolerable certainty, that the proclamation, and the name and surname, must be the cause of this disagreeable occurrence; but how ever did this fellow know his name? And what on earth could have happened that night, for justice to have gained such confidence as to come and lay hands on one of those honest youths who, only the day before, had such a voice in the assembly, and who could not all be asleep now? for he also observed the increasing bustle in the street. He looked at the countenance of the notary, and there perceived the irresolution which he vainly endeavoured to conceal. At last, as well to satisfy his conjectures, and sound the officers, as to gain time, and even attempt a blow, he said, " I understand well enough the origin of all this; it is all from love of the name and surname. Last night I certainly was a little muddled; these landlords have sometimes very treacherous wines; and sometimes, as I say, you know, when wine passes through the

medium of words, it will have its say too. But if this is all, I am now ready to give you every satisfaction; and, besides, you know my name already. Who on earth told you it?"

"Bravo, my boy, bravo!" replied the notary, coaxingly; "I see you've some sense; and believe me, who am in the business, that you're wiser than most. It is the best way of getting out of the difficulty quickly and easily; and with such good dispositions, in two words you will be dismissed and set at liberty. But I, do you see, my good fellow, have my hands tied; I cannot release you, as I should like to do. Come, be quick, and come along with a good heart; for when they see who you are and then I will tell Leave it to me Enough; be quick, my good fellow."

"Ah! you cannot! I understand," said Renzo; and he continued to dress himself, repulsing, by signs, the intimations of the bailiffs, that they would carry him off if he were not very expeditious.

"Shall we pass by the square of the cathedral?" asked he.

"Wherever you like; the shortest way, to set you the sooner at liberty," said the notary, vexed in his heart that he must let this mysterious inquiry of Renzo's pass, which might have served as a subject for a hundred interrogatives.—When one is born to be unfortunate!—thought he.—Just see; a fellow falls into my hands, who, plainly enough, likes nothing better than to talk; and if he could have a little time, he would confess all one wants, without the aid of a rope—*extra formam*, to speak academically, in the way of friendly chit-chat; the very man to take to prison ready examined, without his being at all aware of it; and he must just fall into my hands at this unfortunate moment. Well! there's no help for it,—he continued, listening attentively, and tossing his head backwards—there's

no remedy; it's likely to be a worse day than yesterday.—What gave rise to this thought, was an extraordinary noise he heard in the street, and he could not resist opening the window to take a peep at it. He saw that it was a group of citizens, who, on being required by a patrol of soldiers to disperse, had at first given angry words in reply, and had finally separated in murmuring dissatisfaction; and, what appeared to the notary a fatal sign, the soldiers behaved to them with much civility. Having closed the window, he stood for a moment in perplexity, whether he should finish his undertaking, or leave Renzo in the care of the two bailiffs, while he ran to the high-sheriff to give him an account of his difficulty.—But,—thought he, directly,—they'll set me down for a coward, a base rascal, who ought to execute orders. We are in the ball-room, and we must dance. Curse the throng! What a miserable business!—

Renzo now stood between the two satellites, having one on each side; the notary beckoned to them not to use too much force, and said to him, “Courage, like a good fellow; let us be off, and make haste.”

Renzo, however, was feeling, looking, thinking. He was now entirely dressed, excepting his jacket, which he held in one hand, and feeling with the other in his pockets; “Oho!” said he, looking at the notary with a very significant expression; “here there were some pence, and a letter, my good sir!”

“Everything shall be punctually restored to you,” said the notary, “when these few formalities are properly executed. Let us go, let us go.”

“No, no, no,” said Renzo, shaking his head, “that won't do; I want my money, my good sir. I will give an account of my doings; but I want my money.”

“I'll show you that I trust you; here, and be quick,” said the notary, drawing out of his bosom the sequestered articles, and handing them to Renzo with a sigh.

Renzo received them, and put them into his pocket, muttering between his teeth: "Stand off! you've associated so much with thieves, that you've learnt a little of their business." The bailiffs could no longer restrain their impatience, but the notary curbed them with a glance, saying to himself,—If thou succeedest in setting foot within that threshold, thou shalt pay for this with interest, that thou shalt.—

While Renzo was putting on his jacket, and taking up his hat, the notary beckoned to one of the bailiffs to lead the way down stairs; the prisoner came next behind him, then the other kind friend, and he himself brought up the rear. On reaching the kitchen, and while Renzo was saying: "And this blessed landlord, where is he fled to?" the notary made a sign to the two police-officers, who, seizing each a hand, proceeded hastily to secure his wrists with certain instruments, called, in the hypocritical figures of euphemism, *ruffles*—in plain language, handcuffs. These consisted—we are sorry that we are obliged to descend to particulars unworthy of historical gravity, but perspicuity requires it—they consisted of a small cord, a little longer than the usual size of a wrist, having at the ends two little bits of wood—two tallies, so to say—two small straight pegs. The cord encircled the wrist of the patient; the pieces of wood, passed through the middle and third fingers, were shut up in the hand of the captor, so that by twisting them, he could tighten the bandage at pleasure; and thus he possessed means, not only of securing his prisoner, but also of torturing the refractory; to do which more effectually, the cord was full of knots.

Renzo struggled, and cried, "What treachery is this? To an honest man!"

But the notary, who had fair words at hand on every disagreeable occasion, replied, "Have patience, they only do their duty. What would you have? They are

only formalities; and we can't always treat people as we would wish. If we don't do as we're bid, it will fare badly with us, and worse with you. Have patience!"

While he was speaking, the two bailiffs gave a sudden twitch at the handcuffs. Renzo bore it as a restive horse bears the jerk of a severe bit, and exclaimed, "Patience!"

"Brave youth!" said the notary; "this is the best way of getting off well. What would you have? It is an annoyance, I know; but if you behave well, you'll very soon be rid of it. And, since I see that you're well-disposed, and I feel inclined to help you, I'll give you another little piece of advice for your good. You may believe me, for I'm practised in these matters;—go straightforward, without looking about, or attracting observation; so no one will notice you, no one will observe what you are, and you will preserve your honour. An hour hence you will be set at liberty. There is so much to be done, that they, too, will be in a hurry to have done with you; and, besides, I will speak You shall go about your own business, and nobody will know that you've been in the hands of justice. And you," continued he, turning to the two bailiffs, with a severe countenance, "take care you don't do him any harm; for I will protect him. You are obliged to do your duty; but remember that this is an honest man, a civil youth, who will shortly be at liberty, and who has some regard for his honour. Let nothing appear but that you are three honest men walking together." And, in an imperative tone, and with a threatening look, he concluded: "You understand me?" He then turned to Renzo, his brow smoothed, and his face rendered, in an instant, more cheerful and pleasant, which seemed to say, "What capital friends we are!" and whispered to him again, "Be careful; do as I tell you; don't look

about you ; trust one who wishes you well ; and now let us go." And the convoy moved off.

Renzo, however, believed none of these fine words ; nor that the notary wished him well more than the bailiffs, nor that he was so mighty anxious about his reputation, nor that he had any intention of helping him ; not a word of all this did he believe : he understood well enough that the good man, fearing some favourable opportunity for making his escape might present itself in the way, laid before him all these flattering inducements, to divert him from watching for, and profiting by, it. So that all these exhortations served no other purpose than to determine Renzo more decidedly on a course which he had indistinctly meditated, viz. to act exactly contrary to them.

Let no one hereby conclude that the notary was an inexperienced novice in his trade, for he will be much deceived. Our historian, who seems to have been among his friends, says that he was a matriculated knave ; but at this moment his mind was greatly agitated. With a calm mind, I venture to say, he would have laughed at any one who, to induce others to do something which he himself mistrusted, would have gone about to suggest and inculcate it so eagerly, under the miserable pretence of giving him the disinterested advice of a friend. But it is a general tendency of mankind, when they are agitated and perplexed, and discern what another can do to relieve them from their perplexities, to implore it of him eagerly and perseveringly, and under all kinds of pretexts ; and when villains are agitated and perplexed, they also fall under this common rule. Hence it is that, in similar circumstances, they generally make so poor a figure. Those masterly inventions, those cunning subtleties, by which they are accustomed to conquer, which have become to them almost a second nature, and which, put in operation at the proper time, and conducted with the

necessary tranquillity and serenity of mind, strike a blow so surely and secretly, and, discovered even after the success, receive such universal applause; these, when their unlucky employers are in trouble, are hastily and tumultuously made use of, without either judgment or dexterity: so that a third party, who observes them labouring and busying themselves in this manner, is moved to compassion or provoked to laughter; and those whom they attempt to impose upon, though less crafty than themselves, easily perceive the game they are playing, and gain light from their artifices, which may be turned against them. It can never, therefore, be sufficiently inculcated upon knaves by profession, always to maintain their *sang froid*, or, what is better still, never to get themselves into perplexing circumstances.

No sooner, therefore, were they in the street, than Renzo began to look eagerly in every direction, throwing himself about, bending his head forward, and listening attentively. There was, however, no extraordinary concourse; and though a certain air of sedition might easily be discerned on the face of more than one passer-by, yet every one went straight on his way; and of sedition, properly speaking, there was none.

"Prudence! prudence!" murmured the notary, behind his back: "Your honour, your reputation, my good fellow!" But when Renzo, listening to three men who were approaching with excited looks, heard them speaking of a bake-house, concealed flour, and justice, he began to make signs at them by his looks, and to cough in such a way as indicated anything but a cold. These looked more attentively at the convoy, and then stopped; others who came up stopped also; others who had passed by, turned round on hearing the noise, and retracing their steps, joined the party.

"Take care of yourself; prudence, my lad; it is

worse for you, you see; don't spoil all: honour, reputation," whispered the notary. Renzo was still more intractable. The bailiffs, after consulting with each other by a look, and thinking they were doing quite right, (everybody is liable to err,) again twisted the manacles.

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried the tortured victim: the bystanders gathered close round at the cry; others arrived from every part of the street, and the convoy came to a stand. "He is a dissolute fellow," whispered the notary to those who had gathered around: "A thief taken in the act! Draw back, and make way for justice!" But Renzo, seeing this was the moment—seeing the bailiffs turn white, or at least pale,—If I don't help myself now,—thought he,—it's my own fault.—And he immediately called out, "My friends! they are carrying me off, because yesterday I shouted 'Bread and justice!' I've done nothing; I am an honest man: help me; don't abandon me, my friends!"

A murmur of approbation, followed by more explicit cries in his favour, arose in reply: the bailiffs first commanded, then asked, then begged the nearest to make way and let them pass; but the crowd only continued still more to trample and push forward. The bailiffs, seeing their danger, let go of the manacles, and only endeavoured to lose themselves in the throng, so as to escape without observation. The notary earnestly longed to do the same; but this was more difficult, on account of his black cloak. The poor man, pale in face and dismayed in heart, tried to make himself as diminutive as possible, and writhed his body about so as to slip away through the crowd; but he could not raise his eyes, without seeing a storm gathering against him. He tried every method of appearing a stranger who, passing there by chance, had found himself entangled in the crowd, like a bit of straw in the ice; and encountering

a man face to face, who looked at him fixedly with a more terrible countenance than the others, he, composing his face to a smile, with a look of great simplicity, demanded, "What is all this stir?"

"Uh! you ugly raven!" replied the man. "A raven! a raven!" resounded around. Pushes were added to cries; so that, in short, partly with his own legs, partly by the elbows of others, he obtained what lay nearest to his heart at that moment, a safe exit from the pressing multitude.



CHAPTER XVI.



ESCAPE, escape, my good fellow ! here is a convent ; there is a church ; this way, that way," was heard by Renzo on every side. As to escaping, the reader may judge whether he would have need of advice on this head. From the first moment that the hope of extricating himself from the talons of the police had crossed his mind, he had begun to form his plans, and resolved, if he succeeded in this one, to flee without delay, not only out of the city, but also out of the duchy of Milan.—For,—thought he,—they have my name on their black books, however on earth they've got it ; and with my name and surname, they can seize me whenever they like.—As to an asylum, he would not willingly have recourse to one, unless, indeed, he were reduced to extremity ;—For, if I can be a bird of the woods,—thought he again,—I won't be a bird of the cage.—He had therefore designed as his limit and place of refuge, a village in the territory of Bergamo, where his cousin Bortolo resided, who, the reader may remember, had frequently solicited Renzo to remove thither. But now the point was how to find his way there. Left in an unknown part of a city almost equally unknown, Renzo could not even tell by which gate he should pass to go to Bergamo ; and when he had learnt this, he still did not know the way to the gate. He stood for a moment in doubt whether to ask direction of his liberators ; but as, in the short time he had had for reflection on his

circumstances, many strong suspicions had crossed his mind of that obliging sword-cutler, the father of four children, he was not much inclined to reveal his intentions to a large crowd, where there might be others of the same stamp; he quickly decided, therefore, to get away from that neighbourhood as fast as he could; and he might afterwards ask his way in a part where nobody would know who he was, or why he asked it. Merely saying, then, to his deliverers, "Thank you, thank you, my friends: blessings on you!" and escaping through the space that was immediately cleared for him, he took to his heels, and off he went, up one little street, and down another, running for some time without knowing whither. When he thought he was far enough off, he slackened his pace, not to excite suspicion, and began looking round to choose some person of whom he could make inquiries—some face that would inspire confidence. But here, also, there was need of caution. The inquiry in itself was suspicious; time pressed; the bailiffs, immediately on making their escape from this rencontre, would, undoubtedly, renew their search of the fugitive; the rumour of his flight might even have reached hither: and in such a concourse, Renzo might carefully scrutinize a dozen physiognomies, before he could meet with a countenance that seemed likely to suit his purpose. That fat fellow, standing at the door of his shop, with legs extended, and his hands behind his back, the prominent corpulency of his person projecting beyond the doorway, and supporting his great double chin; who, from mere idleness, was employing himself in alternately raising his tremendous bulk upon his toes, and letting it sink again upon his heels—he looked too much like an inquisitive gossip, who would have returned interrogatories instead of replies. That other, advancing with fixed eyes and a drooping lip, instead of being able expeditiously and satisfactorily to direct another in his

way, scarcely seemed to know his own. That tall, stout boy, who, to say the truth, certainly looked intelligent enough, appeared also rather maliciously inclined, and probably would have taken a mischievous delight in sending a poor stranger exactly the opposite way to the one he was inquiring after. So true is it that, to a man in perplexity, almost everything seems to be a new perplexity! At last, fixing his eyes on one who was approaching in evident haste, he thought that he, having probably some pressing business in hand, would give an immediate and direct answer, to get rid of him; and hearing him talking to himself, he deemed that he must be an undesigning person. He, therefore, accosted him with the question, "Will you be good enough to tell me, sir, which direction I should take to go to Bergamo?"

"To go to Bergamo? The Porta Orientale."

"Thank you, sir: and to the Porta Orientale?"

"Take this street to the left; you will come out into the square of the cathedral; then . . ."

"That will do, sir; I know the rest. Heaven reward you." And on he went by the way that had been pointed out to him. His director looked after him for a moment, and comparing in his mind his way of walking, with the inquiry, thought within himself,—Either he is after somebody, or somebody is after him.—

Renzo reached the square of the cathedral, crossed it, passed by a heap of cinders and extinguished combustibles, and recognised the relics of the bonfire at which he had assisted the day before; he then passed along the flight of steps leading up to the cathedral, and saw again the bake-house of the Crutehes half demolished, and guarded by soldiers; still he proceeded onward, and, by the street which he had already traversed with the crowd, arrived in front of the convent of the Capuchins, where, glancing at the square and the church-door, he said to himself with a deep sigh:—That friar yesterday

gave me good advice, when he bid me go wait in the church, and employ myself profitably there.—

Here he stopped a moment to reconnoitre the gate through which he had to pass; and seeing, even at that distance, many soldiers on guard, his imagination also being rather overstrained, (one must pity him; for he had had enough to unsettle it,) he felt a kind of repugnance at encountering the passage. Here he was, with a place of refuge close at hand, where, with the letter of recommendation, he would have been well received; and he felt strongly tempted to enter it. But he quickly summoned up his courage, and thought:—A bird of the woods, as long as I can. Who knows me? Certainly the bailiffs cannot have divided themselves into enough pieces to come and watch for me at every gate.—He looked behind him to see if they were coming in that direction, and saw neither them, nor any one who seemed to be taking notice of him. He, therefore, set off again, slackened the pace of those unfortunate legs which, with their own good will, would have kept constantly on the run, when it was much better only to walk; and, proceeding leisurely along, whistling in an under-tone, he arrived at the gate. Just at the entrance there was a party of police-officers, together with a reinforcement of Spanish soldiers; but these all had their attention directed to the outside, to forbid entrance to such as, hearing the news of an insurrection, would flock thither like vultures to a deserted field of battle; so that Renzo, quietly walking on, with his eyes bent to the ground, and with a gait between that of a traveller and a common passenger, passed the threshold without any one speaking a word to him: but his heart beat violently. Seeing a little street to the right, he took that way to avoid the high road, and continued his course for some time before he ventured to look round.

On he went; he came to cottages and villages, which

he passed without asking their names : he felt certain of getting away from Milan, and hoped he was going towards Bergamo, and this was enough for him at present. From time to time he kept glancing behind him, while walking onwards, occasionally looking at and rubbing one or other of his wrists, which were still a little benumbed, and marked with a red line from the pressure of the manacles. His thoughts were, as every one may imagine, a confused medley of repentance, disputes, disquietude, revenge, and other more tender feelings ; it was a wearying endeavour to recall what he had said and done the night before, to unravel the mysterious part of his mournful adventures, and, above all, how they had managed to discover his name. His suspicions naturally fell on the sword-cutler, to whom he remembered having spoken very frankly. And retracing the way in which he had drawn him into conversation, together with his whole behaviour, and those proffers which always ended in wishing to know something about him, his suspicions were changed almost to certainty. He had, besides, some faint recollection of continuing to chatter after the departure of the cutler ; but with whom ? guess it, ye crickets ; of what ? his memory, spite of his efforts, could not tell him this : it could only remind him that he had not been at all himself that evening. The poor fellow was lost in these speculations : he was like a man who has affixed his signature to a number of blank formulæ, and committed them to the care of one he esteemed honest and honourable, and having discovered him to be a shuffling meddler, wishes to ascertain the state of his affairs. What can he discover ? It is a chaos. Another painful speculation was how to form some design for the future that would not be a merely ærial project, or at least a melancholy one.

By and by, however, he became still more anxious

about finding his way; and after walking for some distance at a venture, he saw the necessity of making some inquiries. Yet he felt particularly reluctant to utter the word "Bergamo," as if there were something suspicious or dangerous in the name, and could not bring himself to pronounce it. He resolved, however, to ask direction, as he had before done at Milan, of the first passenger whose countenance suited his fancy, and he shortly met with one.

"You are out of the road," replied his guide; and having thought a moment, he pointed out to him, partly by words and partly by gestures, the way he should take to regain the high road. Renzo thanked him for his directions, and pretended to follow them, by actually taking the way he had indicated, with the intention of almost reaching the public road, and then, without losing sight of it, to keep parallel with its course as far as possible, but not to set foot within it. The design was easier to conceive than to effect, and the result was, that, by going thus from right to left in a zigzag course, partly following the directions he obtained by the way, partly correcting them by his own judgment, and adapting them to his intentions, and partly allowing himself to be guided by the lanes he traversed, our fugitive had walked perhaps twelve miles, when he was not more than six distant from Milan; and as to Bergamo, it was a great chance if he were not going away from it. He began at last to perceive that by this method he would never come to an end, and determined to find out some remedy. The plan that occurred to his mind was to get the name of some village bordering on the confines, which he could reach by the neighbouring roads: and by asking his way thither, he could collect information, without leaving behind him the name of Bergamo, which seemed to him to savour so strongly of flight, escape, and crime.

While ruminating on the best way of obtaining these instructions without exciting suspicion, he saw a bush hanging over the door of a solitary cottage just outside a little village. He had for some time felt the need of recruiting his strength, and thinking that this would be the place to serve two purposes at once, he entered. There was no one within but an old woman, with her distaff at her side, and the spindle in her hand. He asked for something to eat, and was offered a little *stracchino** and some good wine; he gladly accepted the food, but excused himself from taking any wine, feeling quite an abhorrence of it, after the errors it had made him guilty of the night before; and then sat down, begging the old woman to make haste. She served up his meal in a moment, and then began to teaze her customer with inquiries, both about himself, and the grand doings at Milan, the report of which had already reached here. Renzo not only contrived to parry and elude her inquiries with much dexterity, but even profited by the difficulty, and made the curiosity of the old woman subservient to his intentions, when she asked him where he was going to.

"I have to go to many places," replied he: "and if I can find a moment of time, I want to pass a little while at that village, rather a large one, on the road to Bergamo, near the border, but in the territory of Milan . . . What do they call it?"—There must be one there, surely,—thought he, in the meanwhile.

"Gorgonzola you mean," replied the old woman.

"Gorgonzola!" repeated Renzo, as if to imprint the word better on his memory. "Is it very far from here?" resumed he.

"I don't know exactly; it may be ten or twelve miles. If one of my sons were here, he could tell you."

* A kind of soft cheese.

“And do you think I can go by these pleasant lanes without taking the high road? There is such a dust there! such a shocking dust! It’s so long since it rained!”

“I fancy you can: you can ask at the first village you come to, after turning to the right.” And she named it.

“That’s well,” said Renzo; and rising, he took in his hand a piece of bread remaining from his scanty meal, of a very different quality to that which he had found the day before at the foot of the cross of San Dionigi; and paying the reckoning, he set off again, following the road to the right hand. By taking care not to wander from it more than was needful, and with the name of Gorgonzola in his mouth, he proceeded from village to village, until, about an hour before sunset, he arrived there.

During his walk, he had resolved to make another stop here, and to take some rather more substantial refreshment. His body also craved a little rest; but rather than gratify this desire, Renzo would have sunk in a swoon upon the ground. He proposed gaining some information at the inn about the distance of the Adda, to ascertain dexterously if there was any cross-road that led to it, and to set off again, even at this hour, immediately after his repast. Born and brought up at the second source, so to say, of this river, he had often heard it said, that at a certain point, and for some considerable distance, it served as a boundary between the Milanese and Venetian states; he had no very distinct idea of where this boundary commenced, or how far it extended; but, for the present, his principal object was to get beyond it. If he did not succeed in reaching it that evening, he resolved to walk as long as the night and his strength would allow him, and afterwards to wait the approaching day in a field, or a wilderness, or wherever God pleased, provided it were not an inn.

After walking a few paces along the street at Gorgonzola, he noticed a sign, entered the inn, and on the landlord's advancing to meet him, ordered something to eat, and a small measure of wine; the additional miles he had passed, and the time of day, having overcome his extreme and fanatical hatred of this beverage. "I must beg you to be quick," added he; "for I'm obliged to go on my way again very soon." This he said, not only because it was the truth, but also for fear the host, imagining that he was going to pass the night there, should come and ask him his name and surname, and where he came from, and on what business But enough!

The landlord replied that he should be waited upon immediately; and Renzo sat down at the end of the table, near the door, the usual place of the bashful.

Some loungers of the village had assembled in this room, who, after having argued over, and discussed, and commented upon, the grand news from Milan of the preceding day, were now longing to know a little how matters were going on; the more so, as their first information was rather fitted to irritate their curiosity than to satisfy it; a sedition, neither subdued nor triumphant; suspended, rather than terminated, by the approach of night; a defective thing; the conclusion of an act, rather than of a drama. One of these detached himself from the party, and seating himself by the new comer, asked him if he came from Milan.

"I?" said Renzo, in a tone of surprise, to gain time for a reply.

"You, if the question is allowable."

Renzo, shaking his head, compressing his lips, and uttering an inarticulate sound, replied; "Milan, from what I hear from what they say around is not exactly a place to go to at present, unless in case of great necessity."

"Does the uproar continue, then, to-day?" demanded his inquisitive companion more eagerly.

"I must have been there to know that," said Renzo.

"But you—don't you come from Milan?"

"I come from Liscate," replied the youth, promptly, who, in the meanwhile, had decided upon his reply. Strictly speaking, he had come from there, because he had passed it; and he had learnt the name from a traveller on the road, who had mentioned that village as the first he must pass on his way to Gorgonzola.

"Oh!" said his friend, in that tone which seems to say: You'd have done better if you had come from Milan; but patience. "And at Liscate," added he, "did you hear nothing about Milan?"

"There may very likely have been somebody who knew something about it," replied the mountaineer, "but I heard nothing." And this was proffered in that particular manner which seems to mean: I've finished. The querist returned to his party, and a moment afterwards, the landlord came to set out his meal.

"How far is it from here to the Adda?" asked Renzo, in an under tone, with the air of one who is half asleep, and an indifferent manner, such as we have already seen him assume on some other occasions.

"To the Adda—to cross it?" said the host.

"That is yes to the Adda."

"Do you want to cross by the bridge of Cassano, or the Ferry of Canonica?"

"Oh, I don't mind where I only ask from curiosity."

"Well, I mention these, because they are the places gentlemen generally choose, and people who can give an account of themselves."

"Very well; and how far is it?"

"You may reckon that to either one or the other, it is somewhere about six miles, more or less."

“ Six miles ! I didn’t know that,” said Renzo. “ Well,” resumed he, with a still greater air of indifference, almost amounting to affectation, “ well, I suppose there are other places for crossing, if anybody is inclined to take a short cut?”

“ There are, certainly,” replied the landlord, fixing his eyes upon him with a look full of malicious curiosity. This was enough to silence all the other inquiries which our youth had ready on his lips. He drew his plate before him, and, looking at the small measure of wine which the landlord had set down on the table, said, “ Is the wine pure?”

“ As gold,” said the host; “ ask all the people of the village and neighbourhood, for they know it; and, besides, you can taste yourself.” So saying, he turned towards his other customers.

“ Plague on these landlords !” exclaimed Renzo in his heart; “ the more I know of them, the worse I find them.” However, he began to eat very heartily, listening at the same time, without appearing to pay any attention, to see what he could learn, to discover what was the general impression here about the great event in which he had had no little share; and, above all, to ascertain if, amongst these talkers, there was one honest man, of whom a poor fellow might venture to make inquiries, without fear of getting into a scrape, and being forced to talk about his own doings.

“ But,” said one, “ this time, it seems clear the Milanese wanted to bring about a very good thing. Well; to-morrow, at latest, we shall know something.”

“ I’m sorry I didn’t go to Milan this morning,” said another.

“ If you go to-morrow, I’ll go with you,” said a third; “ so will I,” said another; “ and I,” said another.

“ What I want to know,” resumed the first, “ is, whether these Milanese gentlemen will think of us poor

people out of the city; or if they'll only get good laws made for themselves. Do you know how they do, eh? They are all proud citizens, every one for himself; and we strangers mightn't be Christians."

"We've mouths, too, either to eat, or to give our own opinions," said another, with a voice as modest as the proposition was daring; "and when things have gone a little further . . ." But he did not think fit to finish the sentence.

"There's corn hidden, not only at Milan," another was beginning, with a dark and designing countenance, when they heard the trampling of a horse approaching; they ran to the door, and having discovered who it was, they all went out to meet him. It was a Milanese merchant, who generally passed the night at this inn, in journeying two or three times a year to Bergamo on



business; and as he almost always found the same company there, they were all his acquaintances. They

now crowded around him ; one took his bridle, another his stirrup, and saluted him with, " Welcome."

" I'm glad to see you."

" Have you had a good journey?"

" Very good ; and how are you all?"

" Pretty well, pretty well. What news from Milan?"

" Ah ! you are always for news," said the merchant, dismounting, and leaving his horse in the care of a boy.

" And, besides," continued he, entering the door with the rest of the party, " by this time you know it, perhaps, better than I do."

" I assure you we know nothing," said more than one, laying his hand on his heart.

" Is it possible?" said the merchant. " Then you shall hear some fine . . . or rather, some bad news. Hcy, landlord, is my usual bed at liberty? Very well ; a glass of wine, and my usual meal ; be quick, for I must go to bed early, and set off to-morrow morning very early, so as to get to Bergamo by dinner-time. And you," continued he, sitting down at the opposite end of the table to where Renzo was seated, silently but attentively listening, " you don't know about all the diabolical doings of yesterday?"

" Yes, we heard something about yesterday."

" You see now !" rejoined the merchant ; " you know the news. I thought, when you are stationed here all day, to watch and sound everybody that comes by . . ."

" But to-day : how have matters gone to-day?"

" Ah, to-day. Do you know nothing about to-day?"

" Nothing whatever ; nobody has come by."

" Then let me wet my lips ; and afterwards I'll tell you about everything. You shall hear." Having filled his glass, he took it in his right hand, and, lifting up his mustachios with the first two fingers of his left, and then settling his beard with the palm, he drank it off, and continued : — " There was little wanting, my worthy

friends, to make to-day as rough a day as yesterday, or worse. I can scarcely believe it true that I am here to tell you about it; for I had once put aside every thought of my journey, to stay and take care of my unfortunate shop."

"What was the matter, then?" said one of his auditors.

"What was the matter? you shall hear." And, carving the meat that was set before him, he began to eat, at the same time continuing his narration. The crowd, standing at both sides of the table, listened to him with open mouths; and Renzo, apparently giving no heed to what he said, listened, perhaps, more eagerly than any of the others, as he slowly finished the last few mouthfuls.

"This morning, then, those rascals who made such a horrible uproar yesterday, repaired to the appointed places of meeting (there was already an understanding between them, and everything was arranged); they united together, and began again the old story of going from street to street, shouting, to collect a crowd. You know it is like when one sweeps a house—with respect be it spoken—the heap of dust increases as one goes along. When they thought they had assembled enough people, they set off towards the house of the superintendent of provisions; as if the treatment they gave him yesterday was not enough, to a gentleman of his character—the villains! And the lies they told about him! All inventions: he is a worthy, exact gentleman; and I may say so, for I am very intimate with him, and serve him with cloth for his servants' livery. They proceeded then towards this house; you ought to see what a rabble, and what faces: just fancy their having passed my shop, with faces that . . . the Jews of the *Via Crucis* are nothing to them. And such things as they uttered! enough to make one stop one's ears, if it

had not been that it might have turned to account in discovering one. They went forward then with the kind intention of plundering the house, but” Here he raised his left hand and extended it in the air, placing the end of his thumb on the point of his nose.

“ But?” said almost all his auditors.

“ But,” continued the merchant, “ they found the street blockaded with planks and carts, and behind this barricado, a good file of soldiers, with their guns levelled, and the butt-ends resting on their shoulders. When they saw this preparation What would you have done?”

“ Turned back.”

“ To be sure ; and so did they. But just listen if it wasn’t the devil that inspired them. They reached the *Cordusio*, and there saw the bakehouse which they wanted to plunder the day before : here they were busy in distributing bread to their customers ; there were noblemen there, aye, the very flower of the nobility, to watch that everything went on in good order ; but the mob (they had the devil within them, I tell you, and besides, there were some whispering in their ears, and urging them on), the mob rushed in furiously ; ‘ seize away, and I will seize too :’ in the twinkling of an eye, noblemen, bakers, customers, loaves, benches, counters, troughs, chests, bags, sieves, bran, flour, dough, all were turned upside down.”

“ And the soldiers?”

“ The soldiers had the vicar’s house to defend ; one cannot sing and carry the cross at the same time. It was all done in the twinkling of an eye, I tell you : off and away ; everything that could be put to any use was carried off. And then they proposed again the beautiful scene of yesterday—dragging the rest to the square, and making a bonfire. They had already begun—the villains !—to carry some things out of the house, when

one greater villain than the rest—what do you think was the proposal he made?”

“What?”

“What! to make a pile of everything in the shop, and to set fire to the heap and the house together. No sooner said than done”

“Did they set fire to it?”

“Wait. A worthy man of the neighbourhood had an inspiration from Heaven. He ran upstairs, sought for a crucifix, found one, and hung it in front of one of the windows; then he took two candles which had been blessed, lit them, and set them outside, on the window-sill, one on each side of the crucifix. The mob looked up. It must be owned, there is still some fear of God in Milan; everybody came to their senses. At least, I mean most of them; there were some, certainly, devils enough to have set fire to Paradise, for the sake of plunder; but, finding that the crowd was not of their opinion, they were obliged to abandon their design, and keep quiet. Just fancy now who arrived—all their Graces of the Cathedral, in procession, with the cross elevated, and in their canonical robes; and my lord the Arch-presbyter began preaching on one side, and my lord the Penitentiary on the other, and others again, scattered here and there: ‘But, good people; what would you do? is this the example you set your children? go home, go home; you shall have bread at a low price; if you’ll only look, you’ll see that the rate is pasted up at every corner.’”

“Was it so?”

“What? was it so? Do you think that their Graces of the Cathedral would come, in their magnificent robes, to tell them falsehoods?”

“And what did the people do?”

“They dispersed by degrees; some ran to the corners of the streets, and for those who could read, there was

the fixed rate, sure enough. What do you think of it? eight ounces of bread for a penny."

"What good luck!"

"*The proof of a pudding is in the eating.* How much flour do you think they have wasted yesterday and this morning? Enough to support the Duchy for two months."

"Then they've made no good laws for us in the country?"

"What has been done at Milan is entirely at the expense of the city. I don't know what to say to you: it must be as God wills. Fortunately, the sedition is finished, for I haven't told you all yet; here comes the best part."

"What is there besides?"

"Only, that, last evening, or this morning, I'm not sure which, many of the leaders have been seized, and four of them, it is known, are to be hung directly. No sooner did this get abroad, than everybody went home the shortest way, not to run the risk of becoming number five. When I left Milan, it looked like a convent of friars."

"But will they really hang them?"

"Undoubtedly, and quickly, too," replied the merchant.

"And what will the people do?" asked the same interrogator as had put the other question.

"The people will go to see them," said the merchant. "They had such a desire to see a Christian hanging in the open air, that they wanted—the vagabonds!—to despatch the superintendent of provisions in that way. By this exchange they will have four wretches, attended with every formality, accompanied by Capuchins, and by friars of the *buona morte* :* but they deserve it. It is

* "A denomination usually given to the monks of the order of St. Paul, the first hermit. They are called *Brothers of death*, *Fratres à morte*, on

an interference of Providence, you see; and it's a necessary thing. They were already beginning to divert themselves by entering the shops, and helping themselves without paying; if they'd let them go on so, after bread, wine would have had its turn, and so on from thing to thing You may imagine whether they would abandon so convenient a practice, of their own free will. And I can tell you, that was no very pleasant thought for an honest man keeping a shop."

"Certainly not," said one of his hearers. "Certainly not," replied the rest, in chorus.

"And," continued the merchant, wiping his beard with the table-cloth, "it had all been projected for some time: there was a league, you know."

"A league, was there?"

"Yes, there was a league. All cabals formed by the Navarrines, by that French cardinal there, you know, with a half-Turkish name, who every day contrives something fresh to annoy the court of Spain. But, above all, he aims at playing some trick in Milan; for he knows well enough—the knave!—that the strength of the king lies there."

"Aye."

"Shall I give you a proof of it? Those who've made the greatest noise were strangers; there were faces going about which had never before been seen in Milan. By the bye, I forgot to tell you one thing which was told me for certain. The police had caught one of these fellows in an inn . . ." Renzo, who had not lost a single syllable of this conversation, was taken with a

account of a figure of a Death's head which they were always to have with them, to remind them continually of their last end. This order, by its constitutions, made in 1620, does not seem to have been established long before Pope Paul V. Louis XIII., in 1621, permitted them to settle in France. The order was, probably, suppressed by Pope Urban VIII. The fraternity of death buries such dead as are abandoned by their relations, and causes masses to be celebrated for them."

cold shudder on hearing this chord touched, and almost slipped under the table before he thought of trying to contain himself. No one, however, perceived it; and the speaker, without interrupting his relation for a moment, had continued: "They don't exactly know where he came from, who sent him, nor what kind of man he was, but he was certainly one of the leaders. Yesterday, in the midst of the uproar, he played the very devil; and then, not content with that, he must begin to harangue the people, and propose—a mere trifle!—to murder all the nobility! The great rascal! Who would support the poor if all the nobles were killed? The police, who had been watching him, laid hands upon him; they found on his person a great bundle of letters, and were leading him away to prison, but his companions, who were keeping guard round the inn, came in great numbers, and delivered him—the villain!"

"And what became of him?"

"It isn't known; he may be fled, or he may be concealed in Milan: they are people who have neither house nor home, and yet find lodging and a place of refuge everywhere: however, though the devil can and will help them, yet they may fall into the hands of justice when they least expect it; for when the pear is ripe it must fall. For the present, it is well known that the letters are in possession of government, and that the whole conspiracy is therein described; and they say that many people are implicated in it. This much is certain, that they have turned Milan upside down, and would have done much worse. It is said that the bakers are rogues: I know they are; but they ought to be hung in the course of justice. They say there is corn hidden; who doesn't know that? But it is the business of the government to keep a good look-out, to bring it to light, and to hang the monopolists in company with the bakers. And if government does nothing, the city

ought to remonstrate; and if they don't listen the first time, remonstrate again; for by dint of appeals they will get what they want; but not adopt the villainous practice of furiously entering shops and warehouses to get booty."

Renzo's small meal had turned into poison. It seemed like an age before he could get out of, and away from, the inn and the village; and a dozen times, at least, he had said to himself: "Now I may surely go." But the fear of exciting suspicion, now increased beyond measure, and prevailing over every other thought, had kept him still nailed to his seat. In this perplexity, he thought the chatterer *must* at last stop talking about him, and determined in his own mind to make his escape as soon as another subject was started.

"For this reason," said one of the party, "knowing how these things go, and that honest men fare but badly in such disturbances, I wouldn't let my curiosity conquer, and have, therefore, remained quietly at home."

"Neither would I move, for the same reason," said another.

"I," added a third, "if I had happened by chance to be at Milan, I would have left any business whatever unfinished, and have returned home as quickly as possible. I have a wife and children; and, besides, to tell the truth, I don't like such stirs."

At this moment the landlord, who had been eagerly listening with the rest, advanced towards the other end of the table to see what the stranger was doing. Renzo seized the opportunity, and beckoning to the host, asked for his account, settled it without dispute, though his purse was by this time very low; and without further delay, went directly to the door, passed the threshold, and taking care not to turn along the same road as that by which he had arrived, set off in the opposite direction, trusting to the guidance of Providence.



CHAPTER XVII.

ONE wish is often enough to allow a man no peace; what, then, must two have been—one at war with the other? Our poor Renzo, as the reader knows, had had two such conflicting desires in his mind for several hours: the wish to make his escape, with the wish to remain undiscovered: and the unfortunate words of the merchant had increased both one and the other to an extravagant degree. His adventure, then, had got abroad! There were means, then, employed to seize him! Who knew how many bailiffs were in the field to give him chase! or what orders had been forwarded to keep a watch in the villages, at the inn, on the roads! He reflected, however, that, after all, there were but two bailiffs who

knew him, and that his name was not written upon his forehead; but then, again, a hundred stories he had heard rushed into his mind, of fugitives caught and discovered in many strange ways, recognised by their walk, by their suspicious air, and other unthought of tokens : everything excited his alarm. Although, as he left Gorgonzola, the tolling of the *Avemaria* sounded in his ears, and the increasing darkness every moment diminished his danger, yet it was very unwillingly that he took the high road, proposing to follow the first by-lane which seemed likely to bring him to the point he was so anxious to reach. At first, he occasionally met a traveller; but so full was his imagination of direful apprehensions, that he had not courage to detain any one to inquire his way.—That innkeeper said six miles,—thought he.—If, by taking these foot-paths and by-lanes, I make them eight, or even ten, my legs, which have lasted me so far, will manage these too. I'm certainly not going towards Milan, so I must be going towards the Adda. Walk away, then; sooner or later, I shall get there. The Adda has a good voice; and when once I'm near it, I shan't want anybody to point it out to me. If any boat is there, I'll cross directly; if not, I'll wait till morning, in a field, or on a tree, like the sparrows : better on a tree than in prison.—

Very soon, he saw a lane turning down to the left, and he pursued it. At this hour, if he had met with any one, he would no longer have hesitated to address him; but he heard not a footstep of living creature. He followed, therefore, the windings of the lane, indulging, the meanwhile, in such reflections as these :

—I play the devil! I murder all the nobility! A packet of letters—I! My companions keeping guard around me! I'd give something to meet with that merchant face to face, on the other side of the Adda, (ah, when shall I get across that blessed Adda?) I'd make him

stand, and ask him, at my convenience, where he had picked up all this fine information. Just please to be informed, my dear sir, that the thing went so and so; and that all the mischief I played was helping Ferrer, as if he had been my brother: know, moreover, that those rascals who, to hear you talk, one would think were my friends, because once I said a word or two, like a good Christian, wanted to play me a very rough trick; know, too, that while you were taking care of your own shop, I was endangering my ribs to save your signor, the superintendent of provisions—a man I never either knew or saw in my life. Wait and see if I ever stir again to help gentlemen It is true we ought to do it for our soul's good: they are our neighbours, too. And that great bundle of letters, where all the conspiracy was revealed, and which you know for certain is in the hands of government; sure enough, I couldn't show it you here without the help of the devil. Would you have any curiosity to see this mighty packet? Look here A single letter! Yes, my good sir, one letter only; and this letter, if you'd like to know, was written by a monk capable of instructing you in any point of doctrine you wish,—a monk, without doing you injustice, a single hair of whose beard is worth all yours put together; and this letter, I should like to tell you, is written, you see, to another monk, also a man Just see, now, who my rascally friends are. Learn, if you please, how to talk another time, particularly when you are talking about a fellow-creature.—

After a little time, however, these and similar reflections gave way to others; his present circumstances occupying the whole attention of our poor traveller. The dread of being pursued and discovered, which had so incessantly embittered his day's journey, now no longer gave him any uneasiness; but how many things made his nightly wanderings sufficiently uncomfortable!—

darkness; solitude; increasing, and now painful, fatigue; a gentle, but steady and piercing breeze, which would be far from agreeable to a man still dressed in the same clothes which he had put on to go a short distance to a wedding, and quickly to return in triumph to his home, only a few steps off; and, what rendered everything doubly irksome, walking at a venture, in search of a place of rest and security.

If he happened to pass through a village, he would walk as quietly and warily as possible, lest any of the doors should be still open; but he saw no further signs of remaining wakefulness among the inhabitants than occasionally a glancing light in one of the windows. When on the road, away from every abode, he would pause, every now and then, and listen eagerly for the beloved murmur of the Adda; but in vain. He heard no sounds but the distant howling of dogs at some solitary dwelling, which floated through the air, at once mournful and threatening. On approaching any of these abodes, the howling was changed into an irritated, angry bark: and in passing before the door, he heard, and almost fancied he saw, the fierce creatures, with their heads at the crack of the door, reiterating their howls. This quickly removed all temptation to knock and ask shelter, and probably his courage would have failed had there been no such obstacles in his way.—Who's there?—thought he:—what do you want at this hour? How did you come here? Tell who you are. Isn't there an inn where you can get a bed? This, at best, is what they will say to me, if I knock: even if it shouldn't be a cowardly sleeper, who would begin to shout out lustily, 'Help! Thieves!' I must have something ready for an answer; and what could I say? If anybody hears a noise in the night, nothing enters their heads but robbers, villains, and rogues: they never think that an honest man may be benighted, not to say a gentleman in his carriage.—

He determined, therefore, to reserve this plan as a last resource in case of necessity, and continued his way, still with the hope of at least discovering the Adda, if not of crossing it, that night, and not being obliged again to go in search of it in broad daylight.

On, therefore, he went, till he reached a part where the country changed from cultivated fields into a heath of ferns and broom. This seemed, if not a sure indication, at least, a kind of argument that there was a river in the neighbourhood; and he advanced across the common, pursuing the path which traversed it. After walking a few paces, he stopped to listen; but in vain. The tediousness of the journey seemed to be increased by the wildness of the place; not a mulberry nor a vine was to be seen, nor any other signs of human culture, which, in the early part of his progress, seemed almost like half companions to him. However, he still went forward, beguiling the time, and endeavouring to drive away the images and apparitions which haunted his mind—the relics of a hundred wonderful stories he had heard—by repeating, as he went along, some of the prayers for the dead.

By degrees, he entered among larger patches of brushwood, wild plum-trees, dwarf oaks, and brambles. Continuing his way, with more impatience than alacrity, he saw scattered occasionally throughout these patches, a solitary tree; and, still following the guidance of the footpath, perceived that he was entering a wood. He felt a kind of reluctance to proceed; but he conquered it, and unwillingly went forward. The further he went, the more this unwillingness increased, and the more did everything he saw vex and harass his imagination. The bushes he discerned before him assumed strange, marvellous, and uncouth forms; the shadows of the tops of the trees alarmed him, as, slightly agitated by the breeze, they quivered on his path, illuminated by the pale light

of the moon ; the very rustling of the withered leaves, as he trampled them under foot, had in it something hateful to his ear. His limbs felt a strange impulse to run, and, at the same time, seemed scarcely able to support him. The cold night-breeze blew more chilly and sharply against his forehead and throat ; he felt it piercing through his thin clothes to his skin, which shivered in the blast, and, penetrating more subtly to his very bones, extinguishing the last remains of vigour. At one time, the weariness and undefined horror with which he had so long been struggling, had suddenly almost overwhelmed him. He nearly lost his self-government ; but terrified above all things at his own terror, he summoned up his former spirits, and by a great effort, forced them to assume their usual sway. Thus fortified for a moment, he stood still to deliberate, and resolved to leave the wood by the same path as he had traversed, to go straight to the last village he had passed, to return once more among mankind, and there to seek shelter, even at the inn. While he thus stood, the rustling of his feet among the leaves hushed, and all perfectly silent around him, a noise reached his ear, a murmur—a murmur of running water. He listens ; assures himself ; and exclaims, “ It’s the Adda ! ” It was like the restoration of a friend, of a brother, of a deliverer. His weariness almost disappeared, his pulse again beat ; he felt his blood circulate freely and warmly through all his veins ; his confidence increased, the gloominess and oppression of his mind, in great part, vanished away ; and he no longer hesitated to penetrate farther into the wood, towards the friendly murmur.

At last he reached the extremity of the flat, at the edge of a steep declivity ; and, peeping through the bushes that everywhere covered its surface, he discerned, at the bottom, the glittering of the running water. Then, raising his eyes, he surveyed the exten-

sive plain on the opposite side, scattered with villages : beyond this the hills, and on one of these a large, whitish tract, in which he fancied he could distinguish a city—Bergamo, undoubtedly. He descended the steep a little way, separating and pushing aside the brushwood with his hands and arms, and looked down, to see if there were any boat moving on the water, or to listen if he could hear the splashing of oars ; but he saw and heard nothing. Had it been anything less than the Adda, Renzo would have descended at once and attempted to ford it ; but this, he well knew, in such a river, was not a matter of very great facility.

He therefore stood to consult with himself what were best to be done. To clamber up into a tree, and there await the dawn of morning, in the chill night-breeze, in a frosty air, and in his present dress, was more than enough to benumb him ; to pace up and down, for constant exercise, all that time, besides that it would have been a very inefficacious defence against the severity of the temperature, was also asking too much of those unfortunate limbs which had already done much more than their duty. Suddenly, he remembered having seen a *cascinotto* in one of the fields adjoining the uncultivated down. Thus the peasants of the Milanese plain designate certain little cottages, thatched with straw, constructed of the trunks and branches of trees, fastened together and filled up with mud, where they are in the habit of depositing their harvest during the summer season, repairing thither at night to protect it : during the rest of the year they are usually unoccupied. He quickly fixed upon this as his resting-place for the night ; and again setting off on his way, re-passed the wood, the tract of bushes, and the heath ; and entering upon the cultivated land, he quickly espied the *cascinotto*, and went towards it. A worm-eaten and tumble-down door, without lock or chain, blocked up the entrance ;

Renzo drew it towards him, and on entering, saw a hurdle, intended to serve the purpose of a hammock, suspended in the air, and supported by bands formed of little twigs; he did not, however, make use of it; but seeing a little straw lying on the ground, thought that, even there, sleep would be very welcome.

Before stretching his weary frame on the bed Providence had prepared for him, he knelt down to offer up his thanks for this blessing, and for all the assistance he had received that terrible day. He then repeated his usual prayers; and, having finished them, begged pardon of God for having omitted them the evening before, and gone to rest, as he said, like a dog, or even worse.—And for this reason,—added he to himself, resting his hands upon the straw, and, from kneeling, changing his posture to that of lying,—for this reason I was awaked by such agreeable visitors in the morning.—He then gathered up all the straw that was scattered around, and spread it over him, so as to make the best covering he could to secure himself from the cold, which, even there, under shelter, made itself sufficiently felt; and crouching beneath it, he tried to get a little sleep, thinking that he had purchased it, that day, more dearly than usual.

Scarcely, however, had he closed his eyes, before visions began to throng his memory, or his fancy (I cannot undertake to indicate the exact spot)—visions so crowded, so incessant, that they quickly banished every idea of sleep. The merchant, the notary, the bailiffs, the sword-cutler, the landlord, Ferrer, the superintendent, the party at the inn, the crowds in the streets; then Don Abbondio, then Don Rodrigo: and, among so many, there were none that did not bring some sad remembrances of misfortune or aversion.

There were but three images that presented themselves to his mind, divested of every bitter recollection,

clear of every suspicion, pleasing in every aspect; and two, principally—certainly very dissimilar, but closely connected in the heart of the youth,—the black-locked Lucia, and the white-bearded Father Cristoforo. Yet the consolation he felt in contemplating even these objects, was anything but unmixed and tranquil. In picturing to himself the good friar, he felt more keenly than ever the disgrace of his faults, his shameful intemperance, and his neglect of the kind Father's paternal advice; and in contemplating the image of Lucia! we will not attempt to describe what he felt; the reader knows the circumstances, and must imagine it himself. Neither did he forget the poor Agnese; Agnese, who had chosen him for her son-in-law, who had considered him almost as one with her only daughter, and before receiving from him the title of mother, had assumed the language and affection of one, and demonstrated parental solicitude for him by her actions. But it was an additional grief to him, and not the least bitter one, that, exactly on account of these affectionate and benevolent intentions, the poor woman was now homeless, and almost houseless, uncertain of the future, and reaping sorrows and troubles from those very circumstances, which he had hoped would be the joy and comfort of her declining years. What a night, poor Renzo! which was to have been the fifth of his nuptials! What a room! What a matrimonial couch! And after such a day! And to precede such a morrow, such a succession of days!—What God wills—replied he, to the thoughts which most tormented him;—what God wills. He knows what He does: it is for our good too. Let it be as a penance for my sins. Lucia is so good! God, surely, will not let her suffer for long—for very long!—

Harassed by such thoughts as these, despairing of obtaining any sleep, and the piercing cold becoming

more and more insufferable, so that from time to time his whole frame shook, and his teeth chattered in spite of himself, Renzo longed for the approach of day, and impatiently measured the slow progress of the hours. I say, measured, because every half-hour he heard, resounding through the deep silence, the strokes of a large clock, probably that of Trezzo. The first time, the sound reached his ear so unexpectedly, without his having the least idea whence it came, it brought with it something solemn and mysterious to his mind: the feeling of a warning uttered in an unknown voice, by some invisible person.

When, at last, the clock had tolled eleven,*—the hour Renzo had determined to get up—he rose, half benumbed with the cold, and falling upon his knees, repeated his matin prayers with more than ordinary devotion; then, standing up, he stretched his limbs, and shook his body, as if to settle and unite his members, which seemed almost dissevered from each other, breathed upon his hands and rubbed them together, and then opened the door of the *cascinotto*, first taking the precaution to look warily about him, perchance any one might be there. No one being visible, he cast his eye round to discover the path he had followed the preceding evening, and quickly recognising it, much clearer and more distinct than his memory pictured it, he set off in that direction.

The sky announced a beautiful day: the pale and rayless moon was yet visible near the horizon, in the spacious field of azure, still softened by a tinge of morning

* It must be borne in mind by the reader, that, according to Italian computation of time, the first hour of the day is seven o'clock in the morning—two o'clock answerable to eight with us, and so on, till seven o'clock in the evening becomes one again. This arrangement would make eleven o'clock, in the text, the same as five o'clock in the morning in England.

grey, which shaded gradually towards the east, into a rosy and primrose hue. Still nearer the horizon, a few irregular clouds stretched out, in lengthened waves, rather azure than grey, their lower sides edged with almost a streak of flame, becoming every moment more vivid and sharply-defined; while, higher up, light and fleecy clouds, mingling with each other, and of a thousand nameless hues, floated on the surface of the placid heavens: a true Lombard sky, *so* beautiful when it *is* beautiful—so brilliant, so calm. Had Renzo been here to enjoy himself, he would certainly have looked upwards, and admired a dawn so different to what he had been accustomed to see among his native mountains; but his eyes were bent to the ground, and he walked on rapidly, both to regain a little warmth, and to reach the river as quickly as he could. He retraced the fields, the grove, the bushes; traversed the wood, with a kind of compassion, as he looked around and remembered the horror he had felt there a few hours before; reached the edge of the precipitous bank, and looking down through the crags and bushes, discovered a fisherman's bark slowly making its way against the stream, close by the shore. He hastily descended the shortest way through the bushes, stood upon the bank, and gently called to the fisherman; and with the intention of appearing to ask a favour of little importance, but, without being aware of it, in a half-supplicatory manner, beckoned to him to approach. The fisherman cast a glance along the shore, looked carefully both up and down the river, and then turning the prow towards Renzo, approached the side. Renzo, who stood at the very edge of the stream, almost with one foot in the water, seized the prow as it drew near, and jumped into the boat.

"Be good enough to take me across to the other side, and I'll pay you for it," said he. The fisherman had already guessed his object, and had turned the prow to

the opposite bank. Renzo, seeing another oar at the bottom of the boat, stooped down and took it up.

"Softly, softly," said the owner; but on seeing how dexterously the youth laid hold of the implement, and prepared to handle it, "Aha!" added he, "you know your business."

"A little," replied Renzo; and he began to row with a vigour and skill beyond those of an amateur. While thus exerting himself, he cast an occasional dark glance at the shore he had just left, and then a look of anxiety to the one they were approaching. He was annoyed at having to go at all down the stream; but the current here was too rapid to cut directly across it; so that the bark, partly cleaving and partly following the course of the water, was obliged to take a diagonal direction. As it happens in all dark and intricate undertakings, that difficulties present themselves to the mind at first only in general, but in the execution of the enterprise are more minutely observable; so, now that the Adda was forded, so to say, Renzo felt a good deal of disquietude at not knowing for certain whether here it was the boundary of the two states, or whether, when this obstacle was overcome, there might not be others still to surmount. Addressing the fisherman, therefore, and nodding with his head towards the whitish spot which he had noticed the night before, and which now appeared much more distinct, "Is that Bergamo?" said he—"that town?"

"The city of Bergamo," replied the fisherman.

"And that shore, there, does it belong to Bergamo?"

"The territory of St. Mark."

"Long live St. Mark!" exclaimed Renzo.

The fisherman made no reply.

They reached, at length, the opposite shore; Renzo jumped out upon it, and, thanking God in his heart, expressed his gratitude in words to the boatman; then

putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out thence a *berlinga*—which, considering his circumstances, was no little loss to him—and handed it to the worthy man, who, giving another glance at the Milanese shore, and along the river in either direction, stretched out his hand, and received the gift. He put it into his pocket, and after compressing his lips, at the same time laying his forefinger across them, with a significant expression of countenance, said, “A good journey to you!” and turned back.

That the reader may not be surprised at the prompt, yet cautious, civility of this man towards a perfect stranger, it will be necessary to inform him that, frequently requested to perform a similar service to smugglers and banditti, he was accustomed to do so, not so much for the sake of the trifling and uncertain gains which he might thereby obtain, as to avoid making himself enemies among these classes. He afforded this assistance whenever he could assure himself of not being discovered by the custom-house officers, bailiffs, or spies. Thus, without particularly favouring one party more than another, he endeavoured to satisfy all, with that impartiality usually exercised by those who are compelled to deal with a certain set of people, while liable to give account to another.

Renzo paused a moment on the bank, to contemplate the opposite shore—that ground which just before had almost burnt beneath his feet.—Ah! I am really out of it!—was his first thought.—Hateful country that you are!—was his second, bidding it farewell. But the third recurred to those whom he had left there. Then he crossed his arms on his breast, heaved a sigh, bent his eyes on the water which flowed at his feet, and thought,—It has passed under the bridge!—Thus that at Lecco was generally called among his fellow-countrymen, by way of eminence.—Ah! hateful world! Enough: whatever God wills.—

He turned his back upon these mournful objects, and went forward, taking, for a mark, the white tract on the side of the hill, until he met with some one to give him more particular directions in his way. It was amusing to see with what carelessness and disembarassment he now accosted travellers, and how boldly he pronounced the name of the village where his cousin resided, without hesitation or disguise. From the first person who directed him, he learnt that he had yet nine miles to travel.

His journey was not very blithesome. Independent of his own troubles, his eye rested every moment on pitiable objects, which told him that he would find in the country he was entering the poverty he had left in his own. All along the way, but more particularly in the villages and large towns, he saw beggars hastening along, mendicants rather from circumstances than profession, who revealed their misery more in their countenances than their clothing: peasants, mountaineers, artisans, entire families; and a mingled murmur of entreaties, disputes, and infants' cries. Besides the mournful pity that it awoke in Renzo's mind, this sight also aroused him to the remembrance of his own circumstances.

—Who knows,—thought he, as he went along,—if I shall find anything to do? if there is any work now to be got, as there used to be? Well; Bortolo is kindly inclined to me; he is a good fellow; he has made some money, and has invited me very often; he, surely, won't forsake me. Besides, Providence has helped me hitherto, and will help me, I hope, for the future.—

In the meanwhile, his appetite, already considerably sharpened, became, as he went on his way, more and more craving; and though he felt that he could manage very well to the end of his journey, which was now only about two miles, without great inconvenience, yet

he reflected that it would not be exactly the thing to make his appearance before his cousin like a beggar, and address him with the salutation : “ Give me something to eat ; ” so drawing all his riches from his pocket, he counted them over on the palm of his hand, to ascertain the amount. It was an amount that required little calculation, yet still there was more than enough to make a small meal ; he, therefore, entered an inn to get a little refreshment ; and, on paying the account, found that he had still a few pence remaining.

Just outside, lying in the street, and so close to the door that he would have fallen over them, had he not been looking about him, Renzo saw two women, one rather elderly, and the other a younger person, with an infant at her breast, which, after vainly endeavouring to satisfy its hunger, was crying bitterly ; they were all three as pale as death ; and standing by them was a man, in whose face and limbs there might still be discerned tokens of former robustness, though now broken and almost destroyed by long poverty. The three beggars stretched out their hands to Renzo, as he left the inn with a free step and re-invigorated air, but none of them spoke ; what more could language have expressed ?

“ There’s a God-send for you ! ” said Renzo, as he hastily thrust his hand into his pocket, and, taking out his last pence, put them into the hand that was nearest to him, and went on his way.

The refreshment, and this good work together (since we are made of both soul and body), had gladdened and cheered all his thoughts. Certain it is that he felt more confidence for the future from having thus deprived himself of his last penny, than if he had found ten such. For if Providence had kept in reserve, for the support of three wretched beggars, almost fainting on the road, the last farthing of a stranger, himself a fugitive, far from his own home, and uncertain how to get

a living, could he think that that Providence would leave in destitution him whom He had made use of for this purpose, and to whom He had given so vivid, so effective, so self-abandoning an inclination? Such was, in general, the feeling of the youth, though, probably, not so clearly defined as that which we have expressed in words. During the remainder of his walk, as his mind recurred to the different circumstances and contingencies which had hitherto appeared the most dark and perplexing, all seemed to brighten. The famine and poverty must come to an end, for there was a harvest every year: in the meantime, he had his cousin Bortolo, and his own abilities; and, as a help towards his support, a little store of money at home, which he could easily send for. With this assistance, at the worst, he could live from day to day as economically as possible, till better times.—Then, when good times have come at last,—continued Renzo, in his fanciful dreams,—the demand for work will be renewed; masters will strive who shall get Milanese weavers, because they know their trade best; the Milanese weavers will hold their heads high; they who want clever workmen must pay for them; we shall make something to live upon, and still have some to spare; we can then furnish a cottage, and write to the women to come. And besides, why wait so long? Shouldn't we have lived upon my little store at home, all this winter? So we can live here. There are curates everywhere. Those two dear women might come now, and we could keep house together. Oh, what a pleasure, to go walking all together on this very road! to go as far as the Adda, in a cart, and have a pic-nic on the shore; yes, just on the shore! and I'd show them the place where I embarked, the thorny path I came down, and the spot where I stood to look if there was a boat!—

At length he reached his cousin's village; and, just at

the entrance, even before he set foot in it, distinguished a house considerably higher than the rest, with several rows of long windows, one above another, and separated by a much smaller space than the divisions between the different stories required: he at once recognised a silk-mill; and going in, asked, in a loud voice, so as to be heard amidst the noise of the running water and the machinery, if Bortolo Castagneri lived there.

“The Signor Bortolo! He’s there.”

—The Signor! that’s a good sign,—thought Renzo; and, seeing his cousin, he ran towards him. Bortolo turned round, recognised his relation, as he exclaimed, “Here I am, myself,” and received him with an “Oh!” of surprise, as they mutually threw their arms round each other’s neck. After the first welcome, Bortolo took his cousin into another room, apart from the noise of the machinery and the eyes of the curious, and greeted him with, “I’m very glad to see you; but you’re a pretty fellow. I’ve invited you so often, and you never would come; and now you arrive in rather a troubled time.”

“Since you will have me tell you, I’ve not come with my own good will,” said Renzo; and then, as briefly as possible, and not without some emotion, he related his mournful story.

“That’s quite another thing,” said Bortolo. “Oh, poor Renzo! But you’ve depended upon me; and I’ll not forsake you. Certainly, there’s no great demand for workmen just now; indeed, it’s all we can do not to turn off those we have, and give up the business; but my master likes me, and he has got some money. And, to tell you the truth, without boasting, he mostly owes it to me; he has the capital, and I give my abilities, such as they are. I’m the head workman, you know; and, besides, between you and me, I’m quite his *factotum*. Poor Lucia Mondella! I remember her as it were but

yesterday: a good girl she was! always the best-behaved in church; and whenever one passed her cottage I see that cottage in my mind's eye, outside the village, with a fine fig-tree peeping over the wall”

“No, no; don't let us talk about it.”

“I was only going to say, that whenever one passed that cottage, there was the reel always going, going, going. And that Don Rodrigo! even in my time he was inclined that way; but now he's playing the devil outright, from what I hear, so long as God leaves him to take his own course. Well, as I was saying, here, too, we are suffering a little from the famine Apropos, how are you for appetite?”

“I got something to eat, a little while ago, on the road.”

“And how are you for money?”

Renzo held out one of his hands, and putting it to his mouth, gently puffed upon it.

“Never mind,” said Bortolo: “I've plenty; pluck up heart, for I hope things will soon change, please God; and then you can repay me, and lay up also a little for yourself.”

“I've a trifling sum at home, and will send for it.”

“Very well; and, in the meantime, you may depend upon me. God has given me wealth, that I might give to others; and whom should I serve so soon as my own relations and friends?”

“I said I should be provided for!” exclaimed Renzo, affectionately pressing his good cousin's hand.

“Then,” rejoined his companion, “they've had a regular uproar at Milan! I think they're all a little mad. The rumour had already reached here; but I want you to tell me things a little more particularly. Ah! we've plenty to talk about. Here, however, you see, we go about it more quietly, and do things with rather more prudence. The city purchased two thousand

loads of corn, from a merchant who lives at Venice: the corn came from Turkey; but when life depends upon it, such things are not looked into very narrowly. See now what this occasioned: the governors of Verona and Brescia stopped up the passes, and said, 'No corn shall pass this way.' What did the Bergamascans do, think you? They despatched a man to Venice, who knew how to talk. The messenger went off in haste, presented himself to the Doge, and asked him what was the meaning of such a trick. And such a speech he made! they say, fit to be printed. What a thing it is to have a man who knows what to say! An order was immediately issued for the free transit of corn, requiring the governors not only to let it pass, but to assist in forwarding it; and now it is on its way. There is provision also for the surrounding country. Another worthy man gave the senate to understand that the people in the country were starving; and they have ordered them four thousand bushels of millet. This helps, you know, to make bread. And then I needn't say, that if there isn't bread for us, we will eat meat. God has given me wealth, as I told you. Now, then, I'll take you to my master: I've often mentioned you to him, and I know he'll welcome you. He's a Bergamscan of the old sort, and a kind-hearted man. Certainly, he doesn't expect you just now; but when he hears your history And besides, he knows how to value good workmen; for the famine must come to an end, and business will go on. But, first of all, I must warn you of one thing. Do you know what they call us Milanese, in this country?"

"No; what is it?"

"They call us blockheads."

"That's not a very nice name."

"So it is: whoever is born in the territory of Milan, and would make a living in that of Bergamo, must be

content to bear it patiently. It is as common, among these people, to give the name of "blockhead" to a Milanese, as "your illustrious lordship" to a cavalier."

"They only say so, I fancy, to those who will put up with it."

"My dear fellow, if you are not disposed continually to brook the title, don't reckon that you can live here. You would be obliged always to have a knife in your hand; and when you have killed, we will suppose, two, three, or four, of your neighbours, you'd meet with somebody who would kill you; and what a nice prospect, to have to appear before God's tribunal with three or four murders on your head!"

"And a Milanese who has a little . . ." here he tapped his forehead with his forefinger, as he had before done at the sign of the Full Moon. "I mean, one who understands his business?"

"It's all the same; he, too, would be a blockhead. Do you know what my master says when he's talking of me to his friends? 'Heaven has sent me this blockhead, to conduct my business; if it were not for this blockhead, I should do very badly.' It's the custom to say so."

"It's a very foolish custom, especially considering what we do; for who was it, in fact, that brought the art here, and now carries it on, but us? Is it possible there's no help for it?"

"Not hitherto; there may be, in the course of time, among the young people who are growing up; but in this generation there is no remedy; they've acquired the habit, and won't leave it off. After all, what is it? It's nothing to the tricks they've played upon you, and that most of our precious fellow-countrymen would still play upon you."

"Well, that's true: if there's no other evil . . ."

"Now that you are persuaded of this, all will go

well. Come, let us go to my master, and be of good heart."

Everything, in fact, did go well, and so exactly in accordance with Bortolo's promises, that it is needless to give any particular description. And it was truly an ordering of Providence; for we shall soon see how little dependence was to be placed upon the small savings Renzo had left at home.



CHAPTER XVIII.

HAT same day, the 13th of November, an express arrived to the Signor *Podestà* of Lecco, and presented him with a despatch from the Signor the high sheriff, containing an order to make every possible strict investigation, to ascertain whether a certain young man, bearing the name of Lorenzo Tramaglino, silk-weaver, who had escaped from the hands *prædicti egregii domini capitanei*, had returned, *palam vel clam*, to his own country, *ignotum* the exact village, *verum in territorio Leuci: quod si compertum fuerit sic esse*, the Signor *Podestà* must endeavour, *quanta maxima diligentia fieri poterit*, to get him into his hands; and having sufficiently secured him, *videlicet*, with strong handcuffs, (seeing that the insufficiency of smaller manacles for the afore-mentioned person has been proved,) must cause him to be conducted to prison, and there detained under strong custody, until he be consigned to the officer, who shall be sent to take him: and in case either of success, or non-success, *accedatis ad domum prædicti Laurentii Tramalini; et facta debita diligentia, quid quid ad rem repertum fuerit auferatis; et informationes de illius prava qualitate, vita, et complicibus, sumatis*; and of all his sayings and doings, what is found and not found, what is taken and not taken, *diligenter referatis*. After humanely assuring himself that the object of inquiry had not returned home, the Signor *Podestà* summoned the village constable, and under his direction, proceeded, with a large retinue of notaries and bailiffs, to the above-mentioned house.

The door was locked, and either no one had the key, or he was not to be found. They, therefore, forced the locks with all due and praiseworthy zeal, which is equivalent to saying that they proceeded as if taking a city by assault. The report of this expedition immediately spread in the neighbourhood, and reached the ears of Father Cristoforo, who, no less astonished than grieved, sought for some information as to the cause of so unexpected an event, from everybody he met with; he could only, however, gather airy conjectures, and contradictory reports: and, at last, therefore, wrote to Father Bonaventura, from whom he imagined he should be able to acquire some more precise information. In the meanwhile, Renzo's relations and friends were summoned to depose all that they knew about his *depraved habits*: to bear the name of Tramaglino became a misfortune, a disgrace, a crime; and the village was quite in a commotion. By degrees, it became known that Renzo had escaped from the hands of justice during the disturbance at Milan, and had not since been seen. It was whispered about that he had been guilty of some high crime and misdemeanour, but what it was no one could tell, or they told it in a hundred different ways. The more heinous the offence with which he was charged, the less was it believed in the village, where Renzo was universally known as an honest, respectable youth; and many conjectured and spread the report, that it was merely a machination set on foot by the powerful Don Rodrigo, to bring about the ruin of his unfortunate rival. So true is it that, judging only by induction, and without the necessary knowledge of facts, even the greatest villains are sometimes wrongfully accused.

But we, who have the facts in our possession, as the saying is, can affirm that, if Don Rodrigo had had no share in Renzo's misfortunes, yet that he rejoiced in them as if they had been his own work, and triumphed

over them among his confidants, especially with Count Attilio. This friend, according to his first intention, should have been, by this time, at Milan; but, on the first announcement of the disturbances that had arisen there, and of the rabble whom he might encounter in a far different mood than tamely to submit to a beating, he thought it expedient to postpone his journey until he received better accounts; and the more so, because having offended many, he had good reason to fear that some who had remained passive only from impotency, might now be encouraged by circumstances, and judge it a favourable opportunity for taking their revenge. The journey, however, was not long delayed; the order despatched from Milan for the execution against Renzo, had already given some indication that things had returned to their ordinary course, and the positive notices which followed quick upon it, confirmed the truth of these appearances. Count Attilio set off immediately, enjoining his cousin to persist in his undertaking, and bring it to an issue, and promising, on his part, that he would use every means to rid him of the friar, to whom the fortunate accident of his cousin's beggarly rival would be a wonderful blow. Scarcely had Attilio gone, when Griso arrived safe and sound from Monza, and related to his master what he had been able to gather:—that Lucia had found refuge in such a monastery, under the protection of the Signora So-and-so; that she was concealed there as if she were a nun herself, never setting foot outside the threshold, and assisting at the services of the church behind a little grated window: an arrangement which was unsatisfactory to many who, having heard some mention of her adventures, and great reports of her beauty, were anxious, for once, to see what she was like.

This account inspired Don Rodrigo with every evil passion, or, to speak more truly, rendered still more

ungovernable those with which he was already possessed. So many circumstances favourable to his design, had only further inflamed that mixture of punctilio, rage, and infamous desire of which his passion was composed. Renzo absent, banished, outlawed—so that any proceedings against him became lawful; and even that his betrothed bride might be considered, in a measure, as the property of a rebel: the only man in the world who would and could interest himself for her, and make a stir that would be noticed in head-quarters, and at a distance—the enraged friar—would himself, probably, be soon incapable of acting for her. Yet here was a new impediment, which not only outweighed all these advantages, but rendered them, it might be said, unavailing. A monastery at Monza, even had there not been a princess in the way, was a bone too hard even for the teeth of a Rodrigo; and wander in his fancy round this retreat as he would, he could devise no way or means of assaulting it, either by force or fraud. He was almost resolved to give up the enterprise, to go to Milan by a circuitous route, so as to avoid passing through Monza, and there to plunge himself into the society of his friends, and their recreations, so as to drown, in thoughts of gaiety, the one idea which had now become so tormenting. But, but, but, his friends!—softly a little with these friends. Instead of diverting his mind, he might reasonably expect to find in their company an incessant renewal and memento of his vexation: for Attilio would certainly have published the affair, and put them all in expectation. Everybody would make inquiries about the mountain girl, and he must give some answer. He had wished, he had tried; and how had he succeeded? He had engaged in an undertaking—rather an unworthy one, certainly; but what of that? One cannot always regulate one's caprices; the point is to satisfy them; and how had he

come off in the enterprise? How? Put down by a peasant, and a friar! Uh! and when an unexpected turn of good fortune had rid him of one, and a skilful friend of the other, without any trouble on the part of the principal person concerned, he, like a fool, knew not how to profit by the juncture, and basely withdrew from the undertaking! It would be enough to make him never again dare to hold up his head among men of spirit, or compel him always to keep his hand on his sword. And then, again, how could he ever return to, how ever remain in, that village, and that country, where, let alone the incessant and bitter remembrances of his passion, he should always bear about with him the disgrace of its failure? where public hatred would have increased, while his reputation for power and superiority would have proportionably diminished? where he might read in the face of every ragamuffin, even through the veil of profound reverences, a galling "You've been gulled, and I'm glad of it!" The path of iniquity, as our manuscript here remarks, is broad, but that does not mean that it is easy; it has its stumbling-blocks, and its thorns, and its course is tedious and wearisome, though it be a downward course.

In this perplexity, unwilling either to give up his purpose, to go back, or to stop, and unable by himself to go forward, a plan occurred to Don Rodrigo's mind, by which he hoped to effect his design. This was to take as a partner and assistant in his enterprise, one whose *hands* could often reach beyond the *views* of others—a man at once, and devil, to whom the difficulty of an undertaking was frequently an incentive to engage in it. But this course also had its inconveniences and its dangers; the more pressing, the less they could be calculated upon beforehand; since it was impossible to foresee where one might be led, when once embarked in an affair with

this man : a powerful auxiliary, certainly, but a not less absolute and dangerous guide.

These thoughts kept Don Rodrigo for several days in a state of worse than tedious perplexity. In the meanwhile, a letter arrived from his cousin, informing him that the plot against the friar was going on very well. Following close upon the lightning bursts forth the thunder-clap ; one fine morning, Don Rodrigo heard that Father Cristoforo had left the convent at Pescarenico. This success, so prompt, and so complete, together with Attilio's letter, encouraging him onward, and threatening him with intolerable ridicule if he withdrew, inclined Don Rodrigo still more to hazard everything rather than give up ; but that which finally decided him, was the unexpected news that Agnese had returned home, thus removing one obstacle from around Lucia. We will relate how these two circumstances were brought about, beginning with the last.

The two unfortunate women were scarcely settled in their retreat, when the report of the disturbances in Milan spread rapidly over Monza, and, consequently, through the monastery ; and following the grand news, came an infinite succession of particulars, which multiplied and varied every moment. The portress, situated just between the street and the monastery, was the channel of information both from within and from without, and, eagerly receiving these reports, retailed them at will to her guests. " Two, six, eight, four, seven, had been imprisoned : they would hang them, some before the bakehouse of *the Crutches*, some at the end of the street where the Superintendent of provisions lived. . . . Aye, aye, just listen, now !—one of them escaped—a man somewhere from Lecco, or thereabouts. I don't know the name ; but some one will be passing who will be able to tell me, to see if you know him."

This announcement, together with the circumstance

that Renzo would just have arrived at Milan on the fatal day, occasioned a good deal of disquietude to the women, and especially to Lucia; but what must it have been, when the portress came to tell them—"It is a man from your very village who has escaped being hung—a silk-weaver, of the name of Tramaglino: do you know him?"

Lucia, who was sitting hemming some needlework, immediately let it fall from her hands; she became extremely pale, and changed countenance so much, that the portress would certainly have observed it, had she been nearer to her. Fortunately, however, she was standing at the door with Agnese, who, though much disturbed, yet not to such a degree as her daughter, preserved a calm countenance, and forced herself to reply, that in a little village, everybody knew everybody; that she was acquainted with him, and could scarcely bring herself to believe that anything of the kind had happened to him, he was so peaceable a youth. She then asked if it was known for certain that he had escaped, and whither.

"Every one says he has escaped, where to, they cannot say; it may be they will catch him again, or it may be he is in safety; but if they do get hold of him, your peaceable youth. . . ."

Fortunately, at this juncture, the portress was called away, and left them—the reader may imagine in what state of mind. For more than a day were the poor woman and her afflicted daughter obliged to remain in this painful suspense, imagining the causes, ways, and consequences, of this unhappy event, and commenting, in their own minds, or in a low voice with each other, on the terrible words their informer had left unfinished.

At length, one Thursday, a man arrived at the monastery in search of Agnès. It was a fishmonger, of Pescarenico, going to Milan, as usual, to dispose of his

fish ; and the good Father Cristoforo had requested him, in passing through Monza, to call in at the monastery, to greet the women in his name, to tell them all he knew about this sad affair of Renzo's, to beseech them to have patience, and put their trust in God ; and to assure them that he would certainly not forget them, but would watch his opportunity for rendering them assistance ; and, in the meantime, would not fail to send them all the news he could collect every week, either by this means, or a similar one. The messenger could tell nothing new or certain about Renzo, except of the execution put into his house, and the search that was being made for him ; but, at the same time, that this had been hitherto in vain, and that it was known for certain that he had reached the territory of Bergamo. Such a certainty, it is unnecessary to say, was a balm to poor Lucia's wounded heart : from that time her tears flowed more freely and calmly ; she felt more comforted in her secret bursts of feeling with her mother ; and expressions of thankfulness began to be mingled with her prayers.

Gertrude frequently invited her into her private apartment, and sometimes detained her there a long while, feeling a pleasure in the ingenuousness and gentleness of the poor girl, and in hearing the thanks and blessings she poured upon her benefactress. She even related to her, in confidence, a part (the blameless part) of her history, and of what she had suffered, that she might come there to suffer, till Lucia's first suspicious astonishment gradually changed to compassion. In that history she found reasons more than enough to explain what she thought rather strange in the behaviour of her patroness, especially when she brought in to her aid Agnese's doctrine about the characters of the nobility. Nevertheless, though sometimes induced to return the confidence which Gertrude reposed in her, yet she carefully avoided any mention of her fresh causes of alarm,

of her new misfortune, and of the ties which bound her to the escaped silk-weaver, lest she should run any risk of spreading a report so full of shame and sorrow. She also parried, to the best of her ability, all Gertrude's inquisitive questions about herself previous to her betrothal, but this was not so much from prudential motives, as because such an account appeared to the simple-minded girl more perplexing, more difficult to relate, than all that she had heard, or thought it possible to hear, from the Signora. In the history of that lady there was oppression, intrigue, suffering — sad and mournful things, but which, nevertheless, could be named: in her own there was a pervading sentiment, a word, which she did not feel it possible to pronounce, when speaking of herself, and as a substitute for which she could never find a periphrasis that did not seem to her mind indelicate: love!

Gertrude was sometimes tempted to be angry at these repulses; but there always appeared behind them so much affection, so much respect, so much gratitude, and even so much trustfulness! Sometimes, perhaps, that modesty, so delicate, sensitive, and mysterious, displeased her still more on another account; but all was quickly forgotten in the soothing thought that every moment recurred to her mind when contemplating Lucia:—I am doing her good.—And this was true; for, besides the asylum she had provided, these conversations and her familiar treatment were some comfort to Lucia. The poor girl also found another satisfaction in constant employment; she always petitioned for something to do, and when she went into the Signora's parlour, generally took a little needlework with her, to keep her fingers employed: but what melancholy thoughts crowded her mind, wherever she went! While plying her needle, — an occupation to which hitherto she had given little attention, — her reel constantly presented itself to

her view ; and with the reel, how many other things !

The second Thursday, the same, or another messenger arrived, bringing salutations and encouragement from Father Cristoforo, and an additional confirmation of Renzo's escape ; but no more positive information about his misfortunes. The reader may remember that the Capuchin had hoped for some account from his brother-friar at Milan, to whom he had given Renzo a letter of recommendation ; he only replied, however, that he had seen neither letter nor person : that a stranger from the country had certainly been to the convent in search of him, but finding him out, had gone away, and had not again made his appearance.

The third Thursday, no messenger came ; which was not only depriving the poor women of an anticipated and hoped-for source of consolation ; but, as it usually happens, on every trifling occasion, to those in sorrow and suspense, was also a subject of much disquietude, and a hundred tormenting suspicions. Agnese had, for some time, been contemplating a visit to her native village, and this unexpected non-appearance of the promised messenger, determined her upon taking such a step. Lucia felt very strange at the thought of being left without the shelter of her mother's wing ; but the longing desire she felt to know something, and her sense of security in that guarded and sacred asylum, conquered her great unwillingness ; and it was arranged between them that Agnese should watch in the street the following day for the fishmonger, who must, necessarily, pass that way on his return from Milan, and that she would ask him to be so good as to give her a seat in his cart, to take her to her own mountains. She met with him, accordingly, and asked if Father Cristoforo had given him no commission for her. The fishmonger said, that he had been out fishing the whole day before his

departure, and had received neither news nor message from the Father. Agnese then made her request, which being granted without hesitation, she took leave of the Signora and her daughter, with many tears; and promising to send them some news soon, and return as quickly as possible, she set off.

The journey was performed without accident. They passed part of the night in an inn on the road-side, as usual, and setting off on their way before sun-rise, arrived early in the morning at Pescaenico. Agnese alighted on the little square before the convent, dismissed her conductor with many thanks; and, since she was at the place, determined, before going home, to see her benefactor, the worthy friar. She rang the bell; the person who came to open the door was fra Galdino, the nut-seeker.



“ Oh, my good woman, what wind has brought you here ? ”

"I want to see Father Cristoforo."

"Father Cristoforo? He's not here."

"Oh! will he be long before he comes back?"

"Long!" said the friar, shrugging his shoulders, so as almost to bury his shorn head in his hood.

"Where has he gone?"

"To Rimini."

"To . . . ?"

"To Rimini."

"Where is that?"

"Eh! eh! eh!" replied the friar, vertically waving his extended hand in the air, to signify a great distance.

"Alas me! But why has he gone away so suddenly?"

"Because the Father provincial ordered it."

"And why have they sent him away at all, when he was doing so much good here? Ah, poor me!"

"If superiors were obliged to render a reason for all the orders they give, where would be our obedience, my good woman?"

"Yes; but this is my ruin."

"This is the way it will be. They will have wanted a good preacher at Rimini (there are some everywhere, to be sure, but sometimes they want a particular man, on purpose); the Father provincial there will have written to the Father provincial here, to know if he had such and such a person; and the Father provincial will have said: 'Father Cristoforo is the man for him;' as, in fact, you see it is."

"Oh, poor us! When did he go?"

"The day before yesterday."

"See now; if I had only done as I first wished, and come a few days sooner! And don't you know when he may return? Can't you guess at all?"

"Eh, my good woman! Nobody knows, except the Father provincial, if even he does. When once one of

our preaching friars has taken the wing, one can never foresee on what branch he will finally alight. They are sought after here and there, and everywhere; and we have convents in all the four quarters of the globe. Rest assured, Father Cristoforo will make a great noise with his course of Lent sermons, at Rimini; for he doesn't always preach extempore, as he did here, that the poor people might understand him; for the city pulpits he has his beautiful written sermons, and his best robes. The fame of this great preacher will spread; and they may ask for him at . . . I don't know where. Besides, we ought to give him up; for we live on the charity of the whole world, and it is but just that we should serve the whole world."

"Oh dear, dear!" again cried Agnese, almost weeping: "What can I do without him? He was like a father to us! It is the undoing of us."

"Listen, my good woman; Father Cristoforo was certainly an admirable man; but we have others, you know, full of charity and ability, and who know how to deal with either rich or poor. Will you have Father Atanasio? or Father Girolamo? or Father Zaccaria? Father Zaccaria, you know, is a man of great worth. And don't you wonder, as some ignorant people do, that he is so thin, and has such a weak voice, and such a miserable beard: I don't say that he is a good preacher, because everybody has his particular gifts; but he is just the man to give advice, you know."

"Oh holy patience!" exclaimed Agnese, with that mixture of gratitude and impatience that one feels at an offer in which there is more good nature than suitableness: "What does it matter to me what a man is or is not, when that good man, who's no longer here, was he who knew all our affairs, and had made preparations to help us?"

"Then you must have patience."

“ I know that,” replied Agnese: “ forgive me for troubling you.”

“ Oh don’t say a word, my good woman ; I am very sorry for you. And if you determine upon consulting any of the Fathers, the convent is here, and won’t go away. I shall see you soon, when I collect the oil.”

“ Good bye,” said Agnese ; and she turned towards her little village, forlorn, perplexed, and disconcerted, like a blind man who has lost his staff.

Rather better informed than fra Galdino, we will now relate how things had really happened. Immediately on Attilio’s arrival at Milan, he went, as he had promised Don Rodrigo, to pay a visit to their common uncle of the Privy-council. (This was a committee, composed, at that time, of thirteen persons of rank, with whom the governor usually consulted, and who, when he either died or resigned his office, temporarily assumed the command.) Their uncle, the Count, a robed member, and one of the oldest of the Council, enjoyed there a certain authority ; but in displaying this authority, and making it felt by those around him, there was not his equal. Ambiguous language, significant silence, abrupt pauses in speaking, a wink of the eye, that seemed to say, “ I may not speak,” flattery without promises, and formal threatenings—all were directed to this end ; and all, more or less, produced the desired effect ; so that even the positive declaration, “ I can do nothing in this business,” pronounced sometimes in absolute truth, but pronounced so that it was not believed, only served to increase the idea, and, therefore, the reality, of his power : like the japanned boxes which may still be occasionally seen in an apothecary’s shop, with sundry Arabic characters stamped upon them, actually containing nothing, yet serving to keep up the credit of the shop. That of the Count, which had been for a long time increasing, by very gradual steps,

had, at last, made a giant's stride, as the saying is, on an extraordinary occasion ; namely, a journey to Madrid, on an embassy to the Court, where the reception that he met with should be related by himself. To mention nothing else, the Count Duke had treated him with particular condescension, and admitted him into his confidence so far as to have asked him, in the presence, he might say, of half the Court, how he liked Madrid, and to have told him, another time, when standing in the recess of a window, that the Cathedral of Milan was the largest Christian temple in the king's dominions.

After paying all due ceremony to his uncle, and delivering his cousin's compliments, Attilio addressed him with a look of seriousness, such as he knew how and when to assume : " I think I am only doing my duty, without betraying Rodrigo's confidence, when I acquaint my uncle with an affair, which, unless you interfere, may become serious, and produce consequences "

" One of his usual scrapes, I suppose ? "

" I can assure you that the fault is not on Rodrigo's side, but his spirit is roused ; and, as I said, no one but you can "

" Well, let us hear, let us hear. "

" There is a Capuchin friar in that neighbourhood, who bears a grudge against my cousin ; and things have gone to such a pitch that "

" How often have I told you both to let the monks fry their own fish ? It is quite sufficient for those to have to do with them who are obliged whose business it is " and here he sighed. " But you can avoid them "

" Signor uncle, I am bound to tell you that Rodrigo would have let them alone, had it been possible. It is the friar who is determined to quarrel with him, and has tried in every way to provoke him. "

“What the —— has this friar to do with my nephew?”
“First of all, he is well known as a restless spirit, who prides himself upon quarrelling with gentlemen. This fellow, too, has taken under his protection and direction, and I don’t know what besides, a country girl of the village, whom he regards with an affection an affection I don’t say of what kind; but a very jealous, suspicious, and sullen affection.”



“I understand,” said the Count, and a ray of cunning intelligence shot across the depth of dulness nature had stamped upon his countenance, now, however, partially veiled under the mask of a politician.

“Now, for some time,” continued Attilio, “this friar has taken a fancy that Rodrigo has, I don’t know what designs upon this”

“Taken a fancy, eh, taken a fancy? I know the Signor Don Rodrigo too well; and it needs another advocate besides your lordship to justify him in these matters.”

“That Rodrigo, Signor uncle, may have had some idle jesting with this girl, when he met her on the road, I can easily believe: he is young, and besides, not a Capuchin; but these are mere nonsenses, not worth mentioning to my noble uncle: the serious part of the business is, that the friar has begun to talk of Rodrigo as he would of a common fellow, and has tried to instigate all the country against him.”

“And the other friars?”

“They don’t meddle with it, because they know him to be a hot-headed fool, and bear a great respect to Rodrigo; but, on the other side, this monk has great reputation among the villagers as a saint, and”

“I fancy he doesn’t know that Rodrigo is my nephew”

“Doesn’t he, though? It is just this that urges him onward.”

“How? how?”

“Because—and he scruples not to publish it—he takes greater delight in vexing Rodrigo, exactly because he has a natural protector of such authority as your lordship; he laughs at great people and politicians, and says that the cord of St. Francis binds even swords and”

“The rash villain! What is his name?”

“Fra Cristoforo, of * * *,” said Attilio; and his uncle, taking a tablet from his desk, and considerably incensed, inscribed within it the unfortunate name. In the meanwhile Attilio continued: “This fellow has always had such a disposition: his former life is well known. He was a plebeian, who possessed a little money, and would, therefore, compete with the noblemen of his country; and out of rage at not being able to make them all yield to him, he killed one, and then turned friar, to escape the gallows.”

“Bravo! capital! we will see, we will see,” exclaimed

the Count, panting and puffing with an important air.

“Lately,” continued Attilio, “he is more enraged than ever, because he has failed in a design which he was very eager about; and from this my noble uncle will understand what sort of man he is. This fellow wanted to marry his protégée; whether to remove her from the perils of the world, you understand, or whatever it might be, at any rate he was determined to marry her; and he had found the . . . the man, another of his protégés, a person whose name my honoured uncle may not improbably have heard; for I dare say the Privy-council have had some transactions with this worthy subject.”

“Who is he?”

“A silk-weaver, Lorenzo Tramaglino, he who . . .”

“Lorenzo Tramaglino!” exclaimed his uncle. “Well done, my brave friar! Certainly! . . . indeed . . . he had a letter for a . . . A crime that . . . But it matters not; very well. And why did Don Rodrigo tell me nothing of all this; but let things go so far, without applying to one who is both able and willing to direct and help him?”

“I will be candid with you. On the one hand, knowing how many intrigues and affairs you had in your head . . .” (here his uncle drew a long breath, and put his hand to his forehead, as if to intimate the fatigue he underwent in the settlement of so many intricate undertakings), “he felt in a manner bound,” continued Attilio, “not to give you any additional trouble. And besides, I will tell you the whole: from what I can gather, he is so vexed, so angry, so annoyed at the insults offered him by this friar, that he is more desirous of getting justice for himself by some summary means, than of obtaining it in the regular way of prudence by the assistance of your lordship. I have tried

to extinguish the flame; but seeing things taking a wrong course, I thought it my duty to inform your lordship of everything, who, after all, is the head and chief prop of the house”

“ You would have done better to have spoken a little sooner.”

“ True; but I continued to hope that the thing would die off of itself, or that the friar would, at last, come to his senses, or would, perhaps, leave the convent, as is often the case among the monks, who are one day here and another there; and then all would have been quietly ended. But”

“ Now it is my business to settle it.”

“ So I have thought. I said to myself: The Signor, my uncle, with his discretion and authority, will know well enough how to prevent a quarrel, and at the same time secure Rodrigo’s honour, which is almost, as it were, his own. This friar, thought I, is always boasting of the girdle of St. Francis; but to employ this girdle seasonably, it is not necessary to have it always buckled round one’s waist. My noble uncle has many means that I know not of: I only know that the Father provincial has, as is but right, a great respect for him; and if my honoured uncle thought that the best course, in this instance, would be to give the friar a change of air; two words”

“ Your lordship will be pleased to leave the arrangement to the person it belongs to,” said his uncle, rather abruptly.

“ Oh, certainly !” exclaimed Attilio, with a toss of his head, and a disguised smile of disdainful compassion. “ I am not intending to give advice to your lordship! But the regard I have for the reputation of the family made me speak. And I am afraid I have been guilty of another error,” added he, with a thoughtful air; “ I fear I have wronged Rodrigo in your lordship’s opinion. I should

have no peace if I were the cause of making you think that Rodrigo had not all the confidence in you, and all the submission to your will, that he ought to have. Believe me, Signor uncle, that, in this instance, it is merely . . .”

“Come, come; you two won’t wrong each other, if you can help it; you will be always friends, till one of you becomes prudent. Ever getting into some scrape or other, and expecting me to settle it: for . . . you will force me to say so, you give me more to think about, you two, than . . .” here he heaved a profound sigh—“all these blessed affairs of state.”

Attilio made a few more excuses, promises, and compliments, and then took his leave, accompanied by a—“Be prudent,”—the Count’s usual form of dismissal to his nephews.



